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# Investigating Third-Year Students' Perspectives on Specific Listening Sub-skills in ESP

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**Abstract:**
In the English for specific purposes (ESP) context, it is essential to tailor listening instruction to meet the needs of students, with an emphasis on developing the specific sub-skills required to enhance students' performance and make their listening most effective. To achieve this, a study was conducted with 130 Third-Year Students of ESP at the English Department of Badji Mokhtar University- Annaba to investigate how they evaluate their sub-skill levels and the challenges they experience. It also explores students' perspectives on the differences between listening in English for general purposes (EGP) and ESP and the sub-skills most relevant to ESP. The paper's results draw stakeholders' attention to these practices that could raise students' awareness about the specific nature of listening in ESP, motivate them, and improve the learning of listening in an ESP context.
**Keywords:** ESP, students' needs, sub-skills, listening comprehension.

## 1.Introduction

Listening is a concern of general English instruction and research, and its mastery is a part of English acquisition. When listening in ESP, learners rely on previously acquired knowledge. The listening characteristics of EGP and ESP share many similarities concerning the cognitive process and the various sources that must be used. However, several ESP-specific situations make listening extremely explicit. As a result, teachers and students of ESP need to adopt a different approach to listening than the one used in general English. This could be accomplished by thoroughly comprehending the nature of listening in ESP and what distinguishes it from listening in EGP.

Among the factors that affect listening in ESP is the purpose that underlies the need for listening. The extent of students' awareness of their purposes significantly impacts the different skills applied. As Richards (1990, p. 54) pointed out, "It is also necessary to recognize the very different purposes that listeners may have in different situations, and how these differences in purpose affect the way they go about listening". The listening

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purpose may determine the appropriate listening habit to use in language learning or for communication acts in general by directing the listener to focus on decoding the specific speech elements relevant to their purposes.

Different listening purposes entail the use of a variety of skills to understand the spoken message. According to Goh (2013, p.58), the primary distinction between ESP listening and EGP listening lies in the sub-skills required in each situation. For example, the ability to identify relevant information and extract specific data is a sub-skill in ESP listening which focuses on subject matters relevant to the listener's field or area of study, such as facts, statistics, examples, names, dates, and other precise details. Specifying the listening sub-skills required in an ESP environment could assist learners in identifying the obstacles to overcome and the steps to take if they want to raise their awareness, meet their learning objectives, and ultimately improve their academic achievement.

The present study aims to investigate the listening requirements in ESP from ESP learners' perspective and attempts to answer the following questions:

(1) How do students evaluate their listening performance, and what are the listening sub-skills they lack?

(2) What sub-skills are needed for the learners to listen for specific purposes effectively?

## 2. The Review of Literature

Listening comprehension is a multifaceted and intentional process that starts with the physiological act of hearing sounds, which are then used by the human mechanism to construct meaning. Though the concept seems quite simple, mainly when situated within the frame of First Language Acquisition (FLA), in a Second/Foreign Language environment, a non-native listener faces various challenges in processing the spoken message. A listener without hearing impairment or brain damage uses different types of knowledge (phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and in some situations, kinesic, Rost, 2011), different processing (bottom-up and top-down, Chaudron & Richards, 1986), and different strategies (cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) to achieve comprehension.

Because of the multiple, complex, and parallel processes, learners face many challenges when dealing with the demands of different listening situations. Chiang and Dunkel (1992, p.346) examined the content of many studies and summarized students' comprehension problems in the following points: Problems processing two-way listening because of students' lack of interaction, problems with identifying the major points of the discourse, its

genre, structure and objectives, problems recognizing discourse markers and logical relationships in the lecture; problems processing fast rates of speech; limited short-term memory to process input; problems using appropriate learning strategies, poor inferencing skills, limited proficiency in English, limited prior knowledge about the content of the text, and problems processing unmodified L2 input.

In ESP, students aim to attain an acceptable level of linguistic proficiency that allows them to improve their academic achievement. To do so, they need to mend their comprehension problems and acquire the necessary skills to process both language and content-related knowledge. In many instances, comprehending the content takes priority. Thus, to understand the difference between listening in ESP and listening in EGP, one needs to fully understand the nature of listening, the different types of knowledge involved, its processing, and the strategies the listener applies. Equally important, they need to know the sub-skills that constitute listening and the situations in which they are needed. Hence, the meticulous analysis of this act helps us understand where both types of listening converge and diverge.

ESP listening and EGP listening share many similarities. Both apply the same cognitive processes, the same sources of knowledge, and many similar strategies. Therefore, both require the application of the same macro-skills, like recognizing the communicative functions of utterances, depending on situations, participants, and goals (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018, p.159). These macro-skills, according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. xv), can be broken down into several micro or sub-skills. This possible division is better for teaching, learning, comprehension and assessment. Besides, it helps learners focus on their learning problems and fix them.

Unlike EGP, however, ESP is strongly associated with the sub-skills which underlie the linguistic behavior of the user; such a view implies that "the emphasis may be on developing the skills rather than on mastering the language per se", Hudson (1991, p.80). Those skills can be reduced in number and made specific according to the learners' purposes, which differ from those in EGP. Consequently, the learners adapt their linguistic performance depending on the purpose and the context in which they find themselves. This opens perspectives to those needing to learn the language for a specific purpose; language itself is not an objective. It is viewed as a set of functions that yield a set of sub-skills learners need to master in order to deal effectively with the demands of communicative acts in different situations.

A sub-skill is defined by Richards and Shmidt (2010, p.364) as "a term sometimes used to refer to the individual processes and abilities which are used in carrying out a complex activity". In listening, for example, they listed "identifying the purpose and scope of the lecture; identifying the role of conjunctions in signaling relationships between different parts of the methods of development lecture; recognizing the functions of pitch and intonation". To understand why students' listening sub-skills vary, we must first understand students' needs and the contexts, in which they will use their listening skills, i.e., to narrow down the (macro) functions further when processing utterances into more specific (micro) components.

In the educational field, it is rare to find a scholar who dealt with the listening skill without referring to its sub-components. Scholars like Brown & Abeywickrama (2018), Buck (2001), Dudley Evans & St John (1998), Flowerdew (1994), Flowerdew& Miller (2005), Goh (2013),Nunan (1989), Rost (2011), Richards (1983), Vandergrift and Goh (2012) and many others investigated the sub-skills used in second/foreign language classroom. Their works highlight the necessity of teaching listening for specific purposes and provide examples of developing listening tasks and exercises for various objectives. They also suggest that training students in specific listening skills can assist them in overcoming listening comprehension challenges and improving their overall listening ability.

Vandergrift and Goh (2012, p.169), for example, provided a set of skills that fit the specific nature of listening where individuals can listen for details, for global understanding, to the main ideas, to infer, to predict, and to listen selectively. Though these skills fit many listening situations, they can be further divided into a collection of sub-skills and tailored to particular contexts and hence become more appropriate for specific listening.

Listening in specific situations necessitates some requirements, especially if shadowed by students' awareness of their listening purpose. First, identifying the central ideas or key points being communicated; this involves listening for important information and distinguishing it from less important details. To fulfill this aim, students need to understand a set of specialized vocabulary and be familiar with technical terms and expressions specific to the context of the text. If students lack lexical knowledge, other elaborate skills, like the ability to infer and predict what is missing in the text can be used to support comprehension. In many situations, students may need to follow complex instructions; this involves listening carefully to the directions, taking notes, clarifying any confusion, and asking questions if

necessary. If feedback is required, students have to provide it using appropriate language and relevant content.

Richards proposed a popular sub-skills list in 1983 in the form of an extended record of 51 academic and conversational skills. In Richards' list, academic listening skills refer to passive communication where students are allowed minimum interaction since one person, generally the lecturer, speaks and the other receives the information. On the other hand, conversational listening involves active engagement and participation from both parties (see Rost's collaborative dimension of listening, 2011, p.3). In his comment on Richards's list, Nunan (1989, p.25) suggested that one list is for the enabling sub-skills learners need to employ in any listening situation. The second one contains discourse comprehension skills or the sub-skills needed for more specific situations.

Other scholars like Field (2008, p.102) referred to Richards' list as a list of strategies students can apply for more effective listening. If strategies are seen as "special ways of processing information" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.1) or "techniques" which focus on more specific aspects of language learning (Naiman et al., 1978, p.4), skills are like the manifestation of those strategies or their pedagogical implications; a measure to evaluate how effective students are. Oxford (1992, p. 178) stated the relationship between strategies and skills, saying, "the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency or achievement overall in specific skill areas".

In his *Language Teaching Matrix* (1990, pp.59-61), Richards explained that his sub-skills list is, in fact, a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes. According to Field (1999, p.338), the listening bottom-up (low-level) process relies on previous knowledge of the language system. In this process, the phonetic level represents the lowest level of analysis. A theoretical linear approach suggests that the listener combines more features to construct phonemes and progress to form syllables, words, sentences, and longer texts; skills like using phonological and grammatical cues to identify information focus in an utterance and organize it into constituents are among the bottom up skills in Richards' list. The top-down (high-level) approach begins at the opposite end. It views comprehension as beginning with the listener's knowledge of non-linguistic elements and progressing to the individual sounds. In this approach, listeners actively interpret the spoken message according to their general and situational backgrounds. According to Chaudron and Richards (1986, p.113), this can manifest in a variety of ways,

including expectations regarding the topic and structure of a discourse based on real-world knowledge and references.

It is widely acknowledged among academics that effective listening is a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes. The controversy lies in which process has primacy over the other. Vandergrift (2004, p.4) pointed out that saying, "while these processes interact in some form of parallel distributed processing, the degree to which listeners may use one process more than another will depend on the purpose for listening". For her part, Goh favors acquiring bottom-up skills when listening in general English:

> Many learners still have difficulties processing low-level information quickly to facilitate higher-level meaning construction. As cognitive processes during listening are recursive and reiterative, students who do not have adequate decoding or bottom-up skills will struggle to keep up with the transient input and this will affect deep processing that can lead to better recall (2013, p.65).

In the same trend of thought, Rost (2011, p.96) explained that perceiving Speech and recognizing words are 'bottom-up' processes in listening; thanks to them, the physical data for comprehension are collected. If, for any reason, listeners fail to collect enough of these low-level cues, they will shift their attention to top-down' processes to achieve comprehension. Many other scholars like Marslen-Wilson (1989) who investigated listening, share this opinion.

In listening for specific purposes, however, students need to apply more top-down sub-skills they assign to the ESP context. Goh (2013, p.62) specified that "while ESP listening shares many common features with ESL listening, it also has unique features as a result of specific requirements of communication contexts. ESP listening development may therefore require more high-level listening skills that are relevant to academic demands as well as workplace-related competency".

Word recognition and understanding are essential skills in language learning in which comprehension necessitates bottom-up and top-down processing. In ESP, students use a wide range of technical and semi-technical registers, where words take different meanings in different contexts. Because of the technical nature ESP projects, each word has a specific role in the sentence. Semi-technical or academic terms like *function*, *energy*, or *resistance* take a specialized meaning despite their frequent use in EGP (Nation, 2001). Therefore, recognizing words in the context of ESP is a top-down decision.

In order to answer the research questions and limit the scope of this study, a list of 35 listening sub-skills is adapted from Richards' taxonomy (1983), focusing on the skills that help process speech and recognize words (see Table 1). As has been stated before, listening sub-skills are strongly linked to the bottom-up and top-down processes. Accordingly, the first twenty sub-skills are part of the bottom-up skills needed for listening. The remaining fifteen sub-skills belong to the top-down skills (see Brown & Abeywickrama (2018), p.135; Richards, 1990, pp. 59-61 and Nunan, 1989, pp. 24-26)

**Table 1.** Conversational and Academic Sub-Skills Needed for Effective Listening

| N | Sub-Skills |
|---|---|
| S1 | retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods |
| S2 | discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language |
| S3 | recognize the stress patterns of words |
| S4 | recognize the rhythmic structure of English |
| S5 | recognize the functions of stress /intonation to signal the information structure |
| S6 | identify words in stressed and unstressed positions |
| S7 | recognize reduced forms of words |
| S8 | distinguish word boundaries |
| S9 | recognize typical word order patterns in the target language |
| S10 | recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics (high frequency) |
| S11 | detect key words (i.e., those which identify topics and propositions) |
| S12 | guess the meanings of words from the contexts |
| S13 | recognize grammatical word classes. |
| S14 | recognize major syntactic patterns and devices |
| S15 | recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse |
| S16 | detect meanings expressed in differing grammatical forms/sentence types |
| S17 | recognize markers of coherence in discourse |
| S18 | process speech at different rates |
| S19 | process speech with pauses, errors, corrections |
| S20 | recognize key lexical items related to subject/topic |
| S21 | reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants … |
| S22 | use real world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings, …. |
| S23 | predict outcomes from events described |
| S24 | infer links and connections between events |
| S25 | deduce causes and effects from events |
| S26 | distinguish between literal and implied meanings |
| S27 | identify and reconstruct topics from discourse |
| S28 | adjust listening strategies to different kinds of listener purposes and goals |
| S29 | signal comprehension or lack of comprehension |
| S30 | identify purpose and scope of lecture |
| S31 | identify topic of lecture and follow topic development |
| S32 | infer relationships (e.g., cause, effect, conclusion) |
| S33 | deduce meanings of words from context |
| S34 | follow lecture despite different accent and speed |
| S35 | recognize warnings, suggestions, advice, instructions |

*Note.* Adapted from "Listening Comprehension: Approach, Design, Procedure," *TESOL Quarterly* by Richards, 1983.

## 3. Method

This study is conducted with a sample of 130 third-year students from the English department at Badji-Mokhtar University-Annaba, who have studied English as a foreign language for approximately nine years. Given English's status as a foreign language in Algeria, students primarily learn it for academic purposes and mainly use it in formal classroom settings. Based

on their oral comprehension results from the first and second years, the subjects of this study have an intermediate level of English proficiency.

To evaluate the subjects' listening ability, a two-part questionnaire was used. In the first part, a five-point Likert scale asked students to rank their effectiveness in 35 listening sub-skills from very effective (5) to very weak (1). Six additional statements were included to gain further insight into the subjects' responses and explain their Likert scale answers about their perceived strengths and weaknesses. In the second part, students were asked to assign the same 35 items used in the first part of the questionnaire to either ESP or EGP contexts. Similar to the first part, three statements were included to assess students' awareness of specific listening requirements.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the questionnaire. The two parts of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using frequency counting through SPSS 26 for Windows. The nine statements were analyzed qualitatively to explore students' opinions and views that are difficult to quantify.

## 4. Results and Discussion

To answer the first question of this study, students were asked to rate their listening ability in 35 listening sub-skills from very effective to very weak. A descriptive analysis of the subjects' responses is provided in Table 2.

The general tendency of the questionnaire results shows that the targeted sample has a consensus on their effective level in the different sub-skills of listening with a percentage of 75.77%. However, the extent of effectiveness varies from one question to another. 85.6% of students reported being very effective with guessing the meanings of words from the contexts, 82.8% are effective in detecting keywords, 70.4 % reported being effective in signaling comprehension or lack of comprehension, and only 68.8% evaluated their skill of retaining chunks of the language of different lengths for short periods as effective.

**Table 2.** Students' Evaluation of Their Ability in the Listening Sub-Skills

| N | V.eff | Eff | Acc | Wea | V.wea | Mean | Std.dev | % | Level | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | 17 | 45 | 48 | 18 | 2 | 3.44 | 0.940 | 68.8 | Effective | 35 |
| S2 | 30 | 40 | 43 | 15 | 2 | 3.62 | 1.014 | 72.4 | Effective | 28 |
| S3 | 38 | 49 | 24 | 17 | 2 | 3.80 | 1.052 | 76 | Effective | 17 |
| S4 | 29 | 52 | 36 | 13 | 0 | 3.75 | 0.918 | 75 | Effective | 18 |
| S5 | 33 | 45 | 34 | 16 | 2 | 3.70 | 1.032 | 74 | Effective | 25 |
| S6 | 32 | 40 | 31 | 23 | 4 | 3.56 | 1.134 | 71.2 | Effective | 31 |
| S7 | 43 | 40 | 31 | 13 | 3 | 3.82 | 1.074 | 76.4 | Effective | 16 |
| S8 | 30 | 45 | 42 | 12 | 1 | 3.70 | 0.954 | 74 | Effective | 24 |
| S9 | 34 | 52 | 32 | 12 | 0 | 3.83 | 0.925 | 76.6 | Effective | 15 |
| S10 | 50 | 46 | 22 | 9 | 3 | 4.01 | 1.023 | 80.2 | Effective | 6 |
| S11 | 57 | 45 | 19 | 7 | 2 | 4.14 | 0.963 | 82.8 | Effective | 2 |
| S12 | 65 | 43 | 17 | 3 | 2 | 4.28 | 0.889 | 85.6 | Very effective | 1 |
| S13 | 47 | 51 | 22 | 6 | 4 | 4.01 | 1.000 | 80.2 | Effective | 5 |
| S14 | 24 | 50 | 34 | 18 | 4 | 3.55 | 1.042 | 71 | Effective | 32 |
| S15 | 27 | 45 | 38 | 17 | 3 | 3.58 | 1.033 | 71.6 | Effective | 30 |
| S16 | 37.7 | 49 | 26 | 13 | 2 | 3.86 | 1.017 | 77.2 | Effective | 12 |
| S17 | 34 | 47 | 35 | 11 | 3 | 3.75 | 1.012 | 75 | Effective | 19 |
| S18 | 27 | 53 | 34 | 14 | 2 | 3.68 | 0.973 | 73.6 | Effective | 27 |
| S19 | 27 | 52 | 30 | 17 | 4 | 3.62 | 1.051 | 72.4 | Effective | 29 |
| S20 | 44 | 56 | 22 | 6 | 2 | 4.03 | 0.914 | 80.6 | Effective | 4 |
| S21 | 27 | 45 | 36 | 19 | 3 | 3.57 | 1.049 | 71.4 | Effective | 26 |
| S22 | 54 | 44 | 21 | 9 | 2 | 4.07 | 0.998 | 81.4 | Effective | 3 |
| S23 | 30 | 51 | 34 | 13 | 2 | 3.72 | 0.981 | 74.4 | Effective | 21 |
| S24 | 31 | 51 | 32 | 12 | 4 | 3.72 | 1.029 | 74.4 | Effective | 22 |
| S25 | 39 | 48 | 29 | 12 | 2 | 3.85 | 1.007 | 77 | Effective | 13 |
| S26 | 40 | 47 | 28 | 15 | 0 | 3.86 | 0.986 | 77.2 | Effective | 11 |
| S27 | 34 | 47 | 29 | 13.8 | 1 | 3.44 | 0.940 | 74.4 | Effective | 23 |
| S28 | 48 | 40 | 25 | 15 | 2 | 3.90 | 1.077 | 78 | Effective | 10 |
| S29 | 27 | 43 | 38 | 15 | 7 | 3.52 | 1.108 | 70.4 | Effective | 34 |
| S30 | 40 | 47 | 29 | 10 | 4 | 3.84 | 1.048 | 76.8 | Effective | 14 |
| S31 | 47 | 45 | 26 | 10 | 2 | 3.96 | 1.007 | 79.2 | Effective | 7 |
| S32 | 42 | 51 | 26 | 7 | 4 | 3.92 | 1.009 | 78.4 | Effective | 9 |
| S33 | 47 | 43 | 27 | 10 | 3 | 3.93 | 1.043 | 78.6 | Effective | 8 |
| S34 | 30 | 39 | 37 | 18 | 6 | 3.53 | 1.129 | 70.6 | Effective | 33 |
| S35 | 37 | 46 | 29 | 12 | 6 | 3.74 | 1.111 | 74.8 | Effective | 20 |
| **Total responses** | | | | | | **132.6** | **23.353** | **75.7** | **Effective** | |

*Note*. V.eff: very effective; Eff: effective; Acc: acceptable; Wea: weak; V.wea: very weak; Stddev: standard deviation

This question aims to evaluate the students' level and know what skills with which they face problems. Though a considerable ratio described their listening as effective, students' responses to the statements mentioned earlier revealed that 14.4%, 17.2%, 29.6%, and 31.2% of respondents evaluated their level in these four skills from acceptable to very weak, respectively. The

results also revealed that 28.6% to 31.2% of respondents reported facing problems with the following ten skills:

1/ retain chunks of the language of different lengths for short periods.
2/ signal comprehension or lack of comprehension.
3/ follow the lecture despite different accents and speeds.
4/ recognize major syntactic patterns and devices.
5/ identify words in stressed and unstressed positions.
6/ recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse
7/ process speech with pauses, errors, corrections.
8/ discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language.
9/ process speech at different rates.
10/ reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants …

Less effective students' responses revealed that they share most of the problems reported by Chiang and Dunkel (1992, p.346), especially those related to the knowledge of the linguistic system and interlocutor's rate and speech aspects. We also noticed that most of these problems are bottom-up. Further investigation is needed to understand the lack of performance in these students, the source of their problems, and the reasons that make them less effective than their peers.

For the students who reported being effective, the possibility that they might have exaggerated their level of proficiency cannot be overlooked. This could be due to a lack of experience or exposure to less challenging material. To gain further understanding of students' responses, we asked the same 130 students whether they were exposed to or experienced one of the six statements in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Students' Responses to Statements Investigating Their Listening Experience

| Questions | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** Whether exposed to explicit teaching of the listening skill. | 64 | 66 |
| **2.** Whether exposed to texts dealing with technical topics and terms. | 67 | 63 |
| **3.** Whether exposed to authentic material in English. | 35 | 95 |
| **4.** Whether discussing some of the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties. | 45 | 85 |
| **5.** Whether experience and knowledge of the world enhance listening. | 122 | 8 |
| **6.** Whether topic familiarity influences listening comprehension. | 122 | 8 |

The first three questions investigate essential issues in listening teaching. They were selected because of the positive influence they have on listening comprehension. Explicit teaching of listening refers to the intentional and controlled instruction of listening skills, methods, and habits to enhance comprehension and communication efficacy. It entails directing

the learners' attention to the components of active listening, such as attention, task-based activities, strategies application, and feedback, and allowing them to practice their listening skills. Explicit teaching of listening can improve students' performance, language proficiency, and overall communication ability, whether conversational or academic.

Using authentic technical texts when *explicitly* teaching listening can give students a more realistic and engaging learning experience. Authentic technical texts are developed for real-life purposes, in academic or professional contexts, and are used by specialists in a given field. Field (2008, p.23) explained, "The term 'authentic' usually refers to listening items originally intended for the ears of a native listener rather than specially prepared for language learners". The explicit teaching of listening, using authentic technical material, can assist students in developing their listening skills in the context relevant to their academic objectives. In addition, authentic texts can expose students to a different vocabulary, language structures, and discourse elements typically needed for their academic careers, which ultimately enhance their language learning.

Because of the positive influence of explicit teaching of listening on students' performance and the importance of providing them with technical texts extracted from real-life situations, it should be a normative practice in listening classes. However, based on students' responses in Table 3, these practices need to be consistently implemented. 66, 63 and 85 out of 130 students did not receive explicit teaching of listening, did not work with specialized texts, and were not exposed to authentic material when learning to listen, respectively.

The second set of questions investigates some factors that enhance students' listening comprehension, such as linguistic, non-linguistic knowledge and topic familiarity. Long (1990, p.73) reported that "linguistic knowledge plays a prominent role in comprehension when appropriate schemata are not available to the listener". Non-linguistic knowledge, such as context, co-text, learners' background, and world knowledge, can provide important contextual information and significantly enhance comprehension. Many scholars (Buck, 2001; Schwartz, 1998; Rumelhart& Ortony,1977; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992) acknowledged the positive impact of non-linguistic knowledge on listening comprehension. This is why introducing students to the important and complementary functions of both types of knowledge is crucial to develop their listening skill. However, 85 out of 130 students reported not receiving any instruction on the role of linguistic and mainly non-linguistic knowledge in enhancing comprehension.

A related concept to non-linguistic knowledge is topic familiarity. According to Long (1990) and Scmidt-Rinehart, (as cited in Rubin, 1994), the more familiar someone is with a topic, the easier it is for them to comprehend and engage with information related to it. Conversely, a lack of familiarity with a topic may make it more challenging to understand and retain information. 112 students out of 130 reported that personal experience and world knowledge enhance listening. These same 112 students also acknowledged that topic familiarity influence listening.

From students' responses, it is clear that more effective methods of teaching listening need to be implemented where students receive instructions on how to listen effectively by teaching listening explicitly using authentic and specialized material. Building topic familiarity and prior knowledge are needed by introducing students to a variety of topics and providing opportunities for them to engage with material related to their interests and experiences. Finally, presenting students with a comprehensible input +1 (Krashen, 1982, p.21) in the form of texts slightly beyond their current level will challenge their ability, motivate them and give them a realistic idea about their academic level.

The second part of the questionnaire is developed to answer the second question of this study. It investigates students' opinions about which listening sub-skills are more pertinent to the context of ESP. The same set of sub-skills used in the first part of the questionnaire was given to the subjects to sort them to where they think they are more pertinent, ESP or EGP. The descriptive analysis of students' responses through SPSS 26 for Windows provided the results presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Students' Assigning the Different Sub-skills to ESP or EGP.

| Skills | Mean | Standard Deviation | ESP | | EGP | | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Ni | Fi% | Ni | Fi% | |
| S1 | 1.38 | 0.486 | 81 | 62.3 | 49 | 37.7 | 6 |
| S2 | 1.45 | 0.500 | 71 | 54.6 | 59 | 45.4 | 11 |
| S3 | 1.65 | 0.478 | 45 | 34.6 | 85 | 65.4 | 22 |
| S4 | 1.62 | 0.486 | 49 | 37.7 | 81 | 62.3 | 21 |
| S5 | 1.61 | 0.490 | 51 | 39.2 | 79 | 60.8 | 20 |
| S6 | 1.62 | 0.486 | 49 | 37.7 | 81 | 62.3 | 21 |
| S7 | 1.51 | 0.502 | 64 | 49.2 | 66 | 50.8 | 15 |
| S8 | 1.52 | 0.502 | 63 | 48.5 | 67 | 51.5 | 16 |
| S9 | 1.42 | 0.496 | 75 | 57.7 | 55 | 42.3 | 9 |
| S10 | 1.38 | 0.488 | 80 | 61.5 | 50 | 38.5 | 7 |
| S11 | 1.30 | 0.460 | 91 | 70.0 | 39 | 30.0 | 1 |
| S12 | 1.38 | 0.486 | 81 | 62.3 | 49 | 37.7 | 6 |
| S13 | 1.57 | 0.497 | 56 | 43.1 | 74 | 56.9 | 19 |
| S14 | 1.69 | 0.463 | 40 | 30.8 | 90 | 69.2 | 23 |
| S15 | 1.46 | 0.500 | 70 | 53.8 | 60 | 46.2 | 12 |
| S16 | 1.51 | 0.502 | 64 | 49.2 | 66 | 50.8 | 15 |
| S17 | 1.45 | 0.499 | 72 | 554 | 58 | 44.6 | 10 |
| S18 | 1.49 | 0.502 | 66 | 51.5 | 64 | 48.5 | 14 |
| S19 | 1.48 | 0.502 | 67 | 51.5 | 63 | 48.5 | 13 |
| S20 | 1.38 | 0.486 | 81 | 62.3 | 49 | 37.7 | 6 |
| S21 | 1.35 | 0.480 | 84 | 64.6 | 46 | 35.4 | 3 |
| S22 | 1.37 | 0.484 | 82 | 63.1 | 48 | 36.9 | 5 |
| S23 | 1.39 | 0.490 | 79 | 60.8 | 51 | 39.2 | 8 |
| S24 | 1.44 | 0.498 | 73 | 56.2 | 57 | 43.8 | 9 |
| S25 | 1.38 | 0.488 | 80 | 61.5 | 50 | 38.5 | 7 |
| S26 | 1.53 | 0.501 | 61 | 46.9 | 69 | 53.1 | 18 |
| S27 | 1.45 | 0.500 | 71 | 54.6 | 59 | 45.4 | 11 |
| S28 | 1.34 | 0.475 | 86 | 66.2 | 44 | 33.8 | 2 |
| S29 | 1.49 | 0.502 | 66 | 50.8 | 64 | 49.2 | 14 |
| S30 | 1.36 | 0.482 | 83 | 63.8 | 47 | 36.2 | 4 |
| S31 | 1.36 | 0.482 | 83 | 63.8 | 47 | 36.2 | 4 |
| S32 | 1.45 | 0.500 | 71 | 54.6 | 59 | 45.4 | 11 |
| S33 | 1.52 | 0.501 | 62 | 47.7 | 68 | 52.3 | 17 |
| S34 | 1.51 | 0.502 | 64 | 49.2 | 66 | 50.8 | 15 |
| S35 | 1.45 | 0.500 | 71 | 54.6 | 59 | 45.4 | 11 |

General listening and specific listening share many similarities. General listening sub-skills are what Nunan (1989, p.25) called the enabling skills learners need to employ in any listening situation. Specific listening sub-skills are needed for more specific contexts. Most of them come in the form of top-down processes. Most of these sub-skills can be used for academic listening, where listeners engage in active listening that requires focused attention to process the information, including the ability to evaluate and analyze information, make connections, draw conclusions, and apply the knowledge gained.

The results show that the first ten choices students selected:

1) 70 % chose to detect keywords (i.e., those which identify topics and propositions)
2) 66.2% adjust listening strategies to different kinds of listener purposes and goals
3) 64.6% reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants …
4) 63.8% identify the purpose and scope of the lecture
5) 63.8% identify the topic of the lecture and follow topic development
6) 63.1% use real-world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings…
7) 62.3% recognize key lexical items related to the subject/topic
8) 62.3% guess the meanings of words from the contexts
9) 62.3 % retain chunks of the language of different lengths for short periods
10) 61.5% recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics (high frequency)

From these results, the first eight choices are more suitable for listening in ESP. Most of the subjects of this study carefully reflected on what is needed for specific listening and provided accurate responses. The ninth and tenth responses, however, are not the choices students would select. Choice number nine, "retain chunks of the language of different lengths for short periods", is a skill that belongs to EGP along with "recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics". Ignoring the meaning of 'core vocabulary', which are words used in everyday communication, might have influenced students' answers.

To investigate how aware students are about specific listening and the sub-skills that make a difference, a last set of questions (Table 5) was introduced to probe students' thoughts and awareness of language function for specific purposes.

**Table 5.** Students' Responses to Statements Investigating their Awareness of the Difference between ESP and EGP

| Questions | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 7. Whether ESP listening and EGP listening are the same. | 22 | 108 |
| 8. Whether the sub-skills needed for ESP and EGP are the same. | 36 | 94 |
| 9. Whether ESP teachers and EGP teachers assume the same roles. | 16 | 114 |

Students were asked whether they think ESP listening and EGP listening are the same. From their experience and the lectures they took in ESP, students know that EGP is a type of language teaching that aims to provide learners with a general command of the English language skills in a wide range of contexts. ESP, on the other hand, is a type of English language teaching that focuses on the specific needs and interests of the learners. The content, materials, and teaching methods are designed to meet the specific

language requirements of learners who need English for their specific fields, such as business, medicine, and engineering. 108 out of 130 think that both types of listening are different. To be more specific, we investigated their opinion about whether the sub-skills needed for ESP and EGP are the same; 94 out of 130 think they are different.

The last question was whether EGP teachers and ESP teachers assume the same role. Indeed the latter plays an essential role in teaching specific listening skills to their students. Experienced ESP teachers better understand the purpose of listening and can help expand their students' perspective; they know that listening to a lecture, for example, requires different skills than listening to a conversation with a peer. Their understanding of the listening purpose helps them provide the appropriate listening material that suits their students' needs and interests, focusing on essential vocabulary relevant to their objectives. ESP teachers also provide relevant practice opportunities in a variety of contexts and provide constructive feedback on their students' listening skills. Because of their expertise, their feedback is specific and targeted to help students improve their listening skills. From the subjects' responses, 114 out of 130 think ESP teachers' and EGP teachers' roles are different.

**5. General Suggestions**

From the results of this study, students need to acquire many important skills to face the demands of listening in specific situations. Field (2008, p.98) pointed out that listening is seen by many as not "a monolithic skill but as a complex of many contributory abilities or sub-skills". He also suggests that "a language learner wishing to develop listening competence needs to acquire a command of as many of these abilities as possible" (2008, p. 98)

Among the inabilities the subjects of this study reported is the lack of knowledge about language and language use which is a detrimental factor that hinders their comprehension. In ESP, the general view favors developing top-down skills and non-linguistic knowledge when processing speech. However, the subjects of this study reported having linguistic problems. By raising their awareness about the complex nature of listening and the specific skills needed in ESP, students better understand what is required of them when listening and become more aware of potential areas of difficulty. Their attention can be directed to promoting general knowledge and strategic competence (strategies use) to help ESP students compensate for the lack of general English knowledge. Besides working on developing their linguistic competence, there

are some suggestions for effective listening of which students have to be aware. They ought to:

- Enrich their content background by reading about the specific topics before coming to the classroom; they can use it to understand the teacher's input better.
- Train themselves to listen for content words and focus on technical words that carry the content of the message, in addition to the use of context and co-text to understand speech.
- Use specialized dictionaries instead of language dictionaries to assimilate the specialized meaning of words and gain more technical and sub-technical vocabulary.
- Train themselves to recognize clues to meaning introduced by the speaker, like using visual aids while listening, discourse clues, and the speaker's body language.
- Train themselves in the primarily cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and reflect on their best assets and most effective strategies to be effective listeners.
- Integrate other skills with listening, as graphs and data show in lectures and note-taking, to keep themselves focused and following.
- Follow helpful techniques to improve their memory capacity, like repetition, chunking, and listening with engaged senses.
- Learn, as a final suggestion, how to provide formative feedback to the teacher. A listener demonstrates their interest in the conversation by engaging in a variety of behaviors that indicate whether or not the listener understands the message being conveyed. These signals are vital for the teacher interested in determining whether the message is understood and whether or not an extra explanation is required.

The teachers share responsibility in drawing their students' attention to different skills that can improve their listening ability. Experienced ESP teacher can rely on their years of practice to locate the sub-skills students need. Besides, teachers need to foster the effective engagement of students through the adequate choice of relevant texts. The chosen language should be selected to respect speed and appropriate pausing. Feedback is indispensable to correcting students' comprehension mistakes. The more relevant the texts are to their needs, the more motivated students become. Here are some suggestions on how to select ESP texts:

- Using short texts to keep students engaged.

- Using authentic texts that illustrate the different topics where language reflects students' needs in real life.
- Using texts that are not loaded with information and directions to maintain students' confidence. If texts are loaded with information, teachers can play them many times so the students can take notes and not be frustrated.
- Vocabulary is essential to listening, and listening is vital to gain vocabulary, especially in technical domains where terms tend to be difficult to recognize. Teachers may develop a glossary of adequate vocabulary to enrich their students' content knowledge by focusing on semi-technical terms.
- Students also need to learn and recognize the accurate pronunciation of technical vocabulary; being familiar with those content terms' pronunciation helps students segment them from streams of connected speech. The more segmented words, the better because it will minimize the number of misheard words.

In ESP, a need analysis determines which Listening skill is most important for a student's development. Setting attainable goals and objectives that consider the level and motivation of students is a crucial step toward achieving a positive outcome. In this case, the teacher's role is to help build the learner's confidence. Select authentic material where students face genuine accents and rapid speech; familiarize the students with the discourse types of their future profession so that they can have a realistic evaluation of their abilities.

## 6. Conclusion

Listening in ESP and listening in EGP share many features, yet differ in the sub-kills needed for more specific requirements. The difference in students' needs implies a different approach to ESP listening skills. Because it cannot be predicted when students face a specific listening requirement, a synthesis of content-oriented with language skill-based teaching will help break the line between the two types of listening, save effort and time, and assist students in mending their listening problems and developing confidence in their abilities. However, it is essential to select authentic technical texts that are appropriate for students' level and to provide appropriate scaffolding, such as pre-teaching vocabulary to familiarize students with the topic and provide additional background information, to support students' understanding of the material. This is in addition to raising students' awareness about the specificity of ESP and the different challenges it might

cause and encouraging them to develop as many sub-skills as possible to face unpredictable specific listening situations.

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