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RESEARCHING LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGY USE IN LECTURE COMPREHENSION: THE CASE OF FIRST–YEAR EFL LMD STUDENTS ATTENDING LECTURES OF LINGUISTICS AT ABOU BEKR BELKAID UNIVERSITY, TLEMCEN

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Abstract

The present study revolves around an assessment of EFL students' difficulties and strategy use when processing lectures of linguistics, at the section of English in Tlemcen University. Different research instruments were administered to first-year LMD learners and some of their teachers. After analysing the data quantitatively and qualitatively, the main findings indicated obstacles related to lack of content schemata, lack of formal schemata, the lecturer's fast rate of speech, in addition to what the students referred to as teacher's method. Furthermore, the students did not have a sound repertoire of strategies. Other findings which may be worth mentioning, as they may have brought about the subjects' difficulties and lack of strategies, include:

- listening comprehension is not systematically developed in practice though it is included in the curriculum of the LMD system;

- learners' lecture comprehension was not systematically developed though students claimed to be exposed to listening at different levels (i.e., in middle and secondary schools, as well as at university).

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BA : Bachelor of Arts

BAC: Baccalaureate

BEM: Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen

CDs: Compact Discs

ESP : English for Specific Purposes

Feb.: February

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

Jun.: June

L1: mother tongue

L2: second/foreign language

M: Mean

RP: Received Pronunciation

SD: standard deviation

SFL : Systemic Functional Linguistics

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

UK: United Kingdom of Britain

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General Introduction

Learning a foreign language requires various types of knowledge including: a phonological system, an abstract system of new grammar rules, a lexical system that is linked to the semantic system of the mother tongue, and a comparative pragmatic system. All of these types of knowledge may be available to the learner through the aural input (Rost 2005). Listening, thus, is a very important vehicle for learning the English language. At university, listening is attached further importance as it is also used to accumulate content information from lectures in different modular courses. This type of listening is referred to as lecture comprehension.

The present research attempts to assess our first-year EFL students' difficulties and strategies in lecture comprehension. The focus is on lectures of linguistics which is regarded as a modular course in the newly implemented education system: LMD. The researcher's choice of linguistics is influenced by her experience as a university student and, then, as a teacher. Throughout this experience, she has very often observed students complaining about the difficulty of comprehending lectures of linguistics, which raised her curiosity to diagnose a lecture listening situation that requires processing linguistics. The ultimate purpose of this study is to assist students to overcome their obstacles and comprehend their lectures effectively.

Therefore, the general research question guiding this investigation is: What are our first-year EFL students' difficulties and strategies in comprehending their lectures of linguistics within the LMD system? In order to answer this question, a number of secondary research questions are raised:

1. What is the status of listening comprehension within LMD curriculum?

2. What is our EFL learners' experience in listening comprehension in general, and lecture comprehension in particular?

3. What might the students' difficulties be in understanding their lectures of linguistics?

4. Do the students have the necessary strategies which assist them in comprehending their lectures of linguistics?

5. Do the students successfully attain comprehension of linguistics lectures?

The hypotheses suggested for such questions are:

1. The skill of listening comprehension might officially be included in the curriculum of LMD, but it may not be systematically developed in practice;

2. Throughout their learning experience, students may have been exposed to listening, but they may not have been taught how to manage to understand university lectures;

3. Among the difficulties that students may have are those related to the speed of delivery of lectures, lack of schematic and content knowledge;

4. Students may not have a sound repertoire of strategies to comprehend their lectures of linguistics;

5. Students may display poor understanding of their lectures of linguistics.

This work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter reports the relevant literature concerning lectures with respect to two aspects: structure and comprehension processes. The former highlights how lectures, as one type of educational genres, are organized into different stages using lexical phrases. The latter revolves around the different distinctive features related to lecture comprehension, including the range of strategies that can be employed while processing this type of genre. Finally, there is a review of the difficulties that students may face in lecture comprehension.

The bulk of the second chapter is devoted to a description of the case study in terms of its design and procedures. The mixed methods paradigm was adopted, because it suited the researcher's research problem in which one data source (qualitative or quantitative) was insufficient and the results needed to be further explained. For example, the findings of the questionnaire, which were mainly quantitative, could not provide the complete picture of the situation as they could not answer a question like: why were the students lacking lecture comprehension strategies? Concerned, mainly, with the first level in LMD, the present study was undertaken in the Section of English at the University of Tlemcen (previously called Abou Bekr Belkaid University). Different research tools were used, including interviews, questionnaires, and tests. They were administered to a number of students and teachers.

The main purpose of the third chapter is to analyse the data gathered quantitatively and qualitatively. An attempt is also made to find the correlation between the variables of this study, which are: learners' strategies, difficulties, and comprehension. The chapter ends with a discussion of the results in the light of the study's secondary research questions and hypotheses.

Based on the findings of the case study some pedagogical suggestions are proposed to develop lecture comprehension and help overcome any obstacles in processing lectures. The proposals address students, teachers, and lecturers.

CHAPTER ONE
LECTURE COMPREHENSION

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter revolves around the literature believed to be relevant to the present study in the field of lecture comprehension. First, there will be a review of how lectures are defined by two approaches: ESP and SFL. For reasons related to feasibility of research the second approach will rather be adopted. Based on SFL, then, a description of the lectures' structure will be presented. The section will also highlight the different lexical phrases, particularly the macro- and micro-organisers, which are often found in lectures. After that, the chapter will explore the processes underlying comprehension in general, and listening comprehension in particular, in addition to those distinctive processes characterizing of one type of listening comprehension: lecture comprehension. The last section will be devoted to some of the listener's barriers to understanding lectures, and the strategies that can be used to get over such difficulties.

1.2. DEFINING 'LECTURE': ESP AND SFL

Lectures have long dominated most language instruction at university. They are classified under different names by ESP and SFL. The aim of the present section is two-fold: first, to offer a bird's eye-view of the principles underlying ESP and SFL and, second, to provide definitions of the concept of lecture within both perspectives.

1.2.1. ESP: an Overview

ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching/learning and research of language in relation to the communicative needs of speakers in academic, workplace, and professional contexts (Basturkmen and Elder 2004). In such settings, language is usually used for a set of specific and limited communicative events. For instance, at university language is employed for a number of communicative events like presenting papers, giving lectures, ...etc.

There may be two central aspects of focus in ESP: needs analysis and description of language use in particular target situations (ibid.). Needs analysis is generally defined as attempts to systematically collect information about the communicative demands of the target situation. This entails information about the language and linguistic skills used most frequently in the target situation, and the difficulties that language learners may experience. Such information is, then, used in order to design courses tailored to help learners meet those demands.

A further key feature of ESP is the emphasis on analysing language as it is used in specific target situations: academic, professional, workplace. In this context, three phases in language description work can be identified: register analysis, rhetorical analysis, and genre analysis. The first phase spans the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, when the main purpose was analysing lexis and syntax. Such a type of analysis especially informs researchers about the relative frequency of some linguistic items but not the special functions these items have in the specific register, and what purpose their presence or absence may serve (Bhatia 1993). The second phase which started in the 1970s was more rhetorical in focus. Rather than simply enumerating and describing linguistic items, researchers investigated the relationship between grammatical choices and rhetorical purposes. Finally, in the 1990s, researchers like Swales (1990) developed a new methodology called genre analysis (see section 1.2.2.).

Bhatia (1993) placed the three types of analysis under the name of discourse analysis. Then, he categorized register analysis and rhetorical analysis as *discourse analysis as description*, which typically concentrates on the linguistic aspects along with their interpretation. Genre analysis is categorized as *discourse analysis as explanation*, which is concerned with answering the question: “Why are specific genres used by the specialist communities the way they are?”

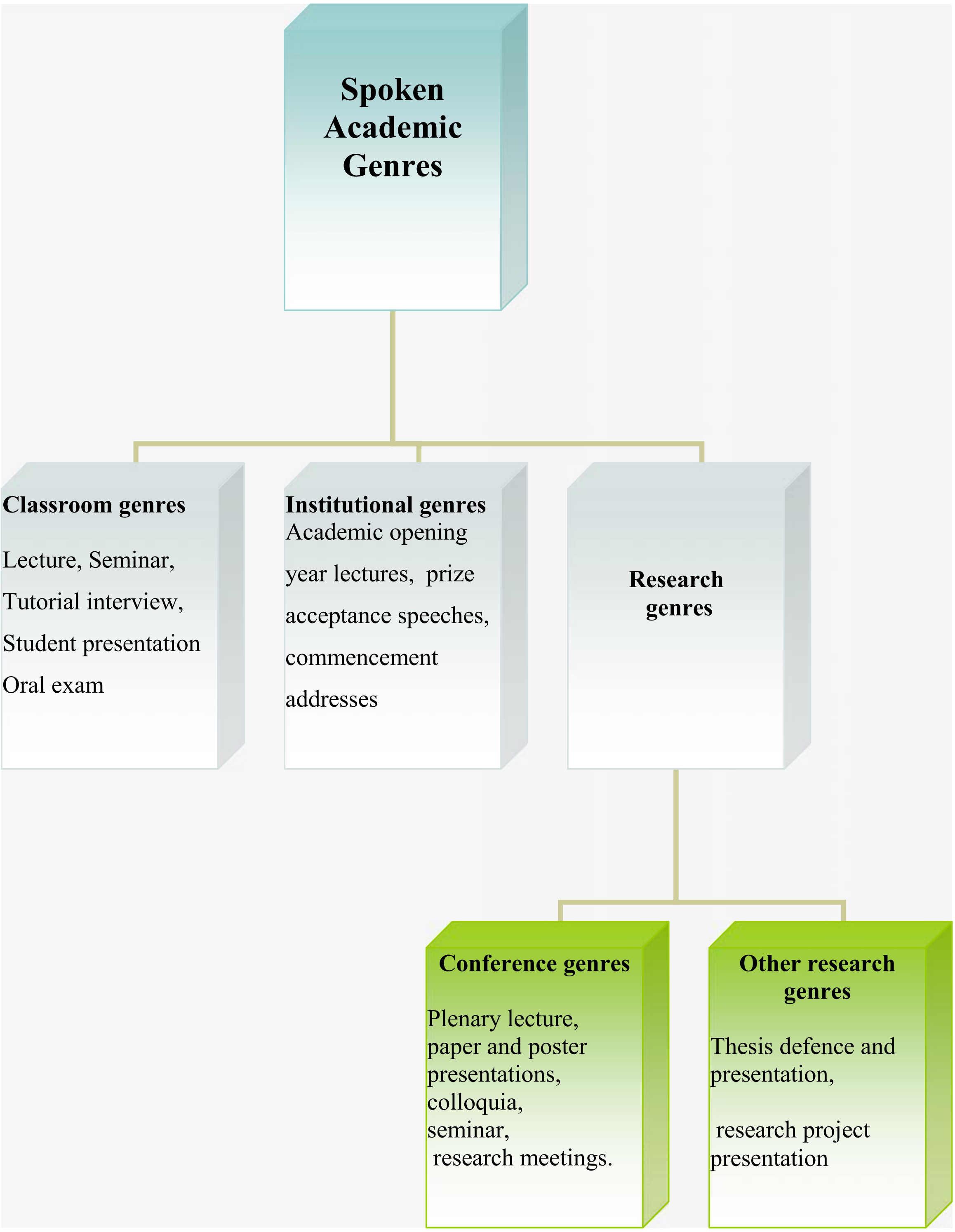
1.2.2. ESP: Lectures as a Spoken Academic Genre

As it was previously mentioned, ESP is partly concerned with analysis of the communicative events of speakers in academic contexts. Therefore, lectures, which are often found in academic settings, are considered as one of the concerns of some ESP researchers (Carlos and Silvira 2004, Hyland 2006). Hyland (ibid.), for instance, categorised academic communicative events as genres. Then, the researcher groups the events according to the medium through which they are delivered: oral or written. Lectures are included within the spoken academic genres, as opposed to those in the written academic genres (see table 1.1.).

Written academic genres	**Spoken academic genres**
• Research articles • Conference abstracts • Undergraduate essays • Book reviews • PhD dissertations • Textbooks	• Lectures • Seminars • Colloquia • Dissertation defences • Student presentations

Table1.1. Some Academic Genres (Adapted from Hyland 2006: 50)

On the other hand, Belles-Fortuno and Gomez (2004)focused on spoken academic genres, only. They further added other examples of genres, and classified all of them into three groups. Table1.2. records this classification.



<u>Table1.2.</u> Classification of Spoken Academic Genres (adapted from Belles-Fortuno and Gomez 2004: 65)

The first group is called classroom genres, and it is related to teaching and learning. It includes genres like lectures and seminars. The second group involves institutional genres such as prize acceptance speeches. Finally, the third group concerns genres associated with research. Under the heading of research genres, there are conference genres like colloquia, and other types of research genres such as thesis defence.

Since lectures are defined as one type of spoken academic genres, it is worth clarifying the concept of genre according to ESP. This will be the main concern of the remaining of this section.

Dudley Evans (1994) traced the origin of the term genre in ESP to a study conducted by Tarone *et al.* (1981) that investigated the use of active and passive forms in journal articles in astrophysics. The study established the principle that within the conventions of the genre studied it is the writer's communicative purpose that governs his choice, at the grammatical and lexical levels.

The view of 'genre' that is adopted in ESP is put forward by Swales (1990: 58) who wrote that genre comprises

> **a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre.**

The term genre is, thus, understood to be a class of language communication that is used as a means of achieving a communicative purpose. This latter evolves in response to particular needs of discourse communities. A discourse community refers to members of a group of people, within a discipline, who communicate with each other through the genre which they possess and which has expectations of what is acceptable (Basturkmen 2006). As far as Berkenkoter and Hukkin (1993) are concerned, there are four characteristics of genre:

- ✓ Dynamism: genres change over time in response to the needs of discourse communities;

- ✓ Situatedness: genres do not exist in isolation, but they are situated in the communicative activities of daily professional/ academic life. Thus, knowledge of genre is derived from and develops through participation in such activities;

- ✓ Community ownership: genre conventions are signals of a discourse community's norms;

- ✓ Form and content: genre knowledge encompasses both form and content.

Research into genre in ESP may include the following procedures (Basturkmen 2006):

- Identification of the genre which is used by a particular discourse community;

- Development of a corpus of authentic samples of the particular genre to be investigated;

- Analysis of the oft-repeated patterns which constitute the structure of that genre.

Genre is usually analysed in terms of text segments called moves. Some of the moves are obligatory as they are necessary to achieve the communicative goal of the genre. Others are optional– those that a speaker or writer may choose to employ if he thinks they contribute to the effectiveness of the communication, but do not alter the main purpose of the genre. An example of genre analysis is Swales' model (1990) for introductions of research articles, which is illustrated in Table 1.3.

According to this model there are three obligatory moves: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying a niche. Their purposes are respectively: introducing the topic, describing how the research is unique and significant, and outlining what the researcher will do in the research paper. Each obligatory move can be realized through a number of optional moves, also called steps.

Move 1: establishing a territory	
Step 1: claiming centrality	and/or
Step 2: making topic generalization(s)	and/or
Step 3: reviewing items of previous research	
Move 2: establishing a niche	
Step 1: counter-claiming	and/or
Step 2: indicating a gap	and/or
Step 3: question-raising	and/or
Step 4: continuing a tradition	
Move 3: occupying niche	
Step 1: outlining the purpose of the research study	and/or
Step 2: announcing the principal findings	
and/or	
Step 3: indicating the structure of the research article	

Table1.3. Swales' Model for Research Report Introductions (qtd. in McKay 2006:146)

In addition to ESP, SFL researchers also tackled the notion of 'lecture'. The way they approached the study of this genre will be reviewed as follows.

1.2.3. SFL: an Overview

SFL has been developed on the foundation of the work by the famous linguist Michael Halliday, whose extensive writings since the 1960s have been edited and re-issued in a ten-volume set of collected works (see Halliday and Webster 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b). The theory put forward four main claims about language (Eggins 2004):

- ✓ Language use is functional: language is considered as a source used for communication and not just as a set of formal rules. Using Halliday's words (2003: 433), the theory **"defines its scope by reference to usage rather than grammaticality."**

- ✓ The main function of language is to make meanings: people do not communicate to merely exchange sounds, or even sentences with each other. Rather, the main functional purpose of language is to enable language users to make meanings;

- ✓ Language is said to be systemic– a meaning system: in order to make meaning, the language user is constantly making a set of choices which are expressed, for example, by words, grammatical structures, and intonation. In this context, SFL suggests that there are three types of meaning: ideational, interpersonal, textual (see section 1.3.);

- ✓ Choices, which a language user makes, are determined by the contexts in which they are used.

Hence, for SFL language is functional, semantic, systematic, and contextual. According to Eggins (2004), the theory has been applied by different researchers in different fields, including language education (Christie and Martin, 1997, Unsworth 2000), child language development (Painter 1998), computational linguistics (Teich 1999), media discourse (White 2002), casual conversation (Eggins and Slade 1997), to name just a few. SFL has also been applied to interpret the 'grammar' of other semiotic modes, such as visuals (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

The following sections will attempt to answer the question: How does SFL approach the study of lectures? In other words; how does it define lectures and analyse their structure?

1.2.4. SFL: Lectures as an Educational Genre

Under SFL lectures are categorised as an educational genre. The approach categorizes a variety of social activities as genres (see table 1.4.), which is in contrast to the ESP approach that is confined to genres in specific contexts (for instance, academic settings).

Educational genres	Popular fiction genres	Popular non-fiction genres	Literary genres	Every day genres
Lectures tutorials Seminars report/essay writing examination text-book	romantic novels sitcoms Whodunits	instructional manuals news stories recipes	short stories ballads Sonnets fables	telling stories gossiping exchanging views buying / selling things making Appointements

Table1.4. Types of Genres According to SFL (Adapted from Eggins 2004: 56)

'Genre' is defined in terms of its social purpose. Hence, different genres are ways of using language to accomplish different purposes (Eggins and Martin 1997). As far as the purpose of the lecture is concerned, Young (1994) pointed out that lectures are used to transmit information. In this line of thought, Hansen and Jensen (1994) add that the main communicative focus of lectures is to disseminate information in a logical sequential structure, so as to ultimately facilitate comprehension to the audience.

At the end of this discussion of 'lectures' in ESP and SFL, it should be mentioned that because of the availability and portability of the written language, most genre-based studies in ESP have been concerned with written genres (Dudley-Evans 1994). This may explain why the researcher could not find more information about the spoken genre of lectures in terms of its structure and moves. As corollary to that, SFL will rather be adopted in providing an account of the structure of lectures.

1.3. THE STRUCTURE OF LECTURES

Lectures, as a genre, can be identified and analyzed with reference to its register configuration, and schematic structure. The former is said to be composed of three components− field, tenor, mode− which are related to three different functions− ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The latter refers to the stages constituting lectures. In the meantime, lectures are often organized through some lexical phrases. All these characteristics will be highlighted in the following sections.

1.3.1. Register Configuration and Schematic Structure

Register configuration involves three variables which are expressed through three functions, also called metafunctions. The variables are:

- ✓ Field: it is the social action/activity taking place. That is; what it is that the participants are engaged in?

- ✓ Tenor: it refers to the participants taking part, their statuses and roles;

- ✓ Mode: this is the channel of communication. Examples of mode include: spoken language, a combination of spoken and written language, written language to be read, or spontaneous speech.

Additionally, SFL suggests that there are three types of meaning, called metafunctions, that language users make: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. In her encyclopedia of key concepts in language and linguistics, Trask (1999: 206) defined the ideational function as: **“the conveying of semantic content representing information about our experience”**, and the interpersonal function as: **“the establishment and maintenance of social relations”** and the textual function as: **“the linking of linguistic elements to other linguistic elements, so that the various parts …can be integrated into a coherent and cohesive whole.”**

Hence, in the ideational function language represents our experiences. It is used to talk about what is happening, what has happened, and what will happen. In the interpersonal function language helps organise the social reality of people interacting with each other (by making statements, asking questions, giving commands, saying how sure they are, saying how they feel about things). Finally, the textual function is concerned with how language is organized in such a way that a coherent and cohesive body of information is produced. In other words, it is about how the ideational and interpersonal functions are **"to be woven into the fabric linguistic structure"** (Halliday 2003: 317).

The three variables of register: field, tenor, and mode are respectively related to the three functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Trask 1999, Eggins 2004). Field is expressed through ideational meaning, which means that there is a relation between the social activity taking place and what people talk about. With respect to lectures, if the field, that is the subject matter, is linguistics, for instance, then the lecture should be about language, schools of language; language levels; or any related topic. Tenor is expressed through interpersonal meanings. That is, there is a relation between the participants and the way they interact with each others to establish a particular relationship. In the case of lectures, the participants of a lecture, being the lecturer and the students, may express different functions like asking questions. However, only the lecturer can give a command. Mode is expressed through textual meaning. As far as lectures are concerned, the channel of communication, that is spoken language, should be organized in such a way that a coherent and cohesive body of information is presented. This can be evident through the choice of which information has to come first, how to keep track of ideas or characters (for example by using pronouns), how to organize the different stages of a lecture. An example of the relation between the different register variables and the functions with respect to lectures of linguistics is illustrated in the following table.

Register variables of lectures	**Metafunctions related to lectures**
Field: lectures of linguistics	Ideational: language, linguistic schools, linguistic levels….
Tenor: lecturer and audience	Interpersonal: interaction between the lecturer the audience using some language functions.
Mode: spoken language, visual/ written media, like overhead projector and handouts.	How the topic of the lecture and the participants' interaction are organized through channel of communication.

Table 1.5. An Example of Register Variables and Metafunctions in a Lecture of Linguistics

The second element of genre analysis is the schematic structure. It refers to the staged, step by step organization of the genre structure. The reason why there are stages is that language users cannot express themselves at once (Eggins 2004). Each stage contributes a part of the overall message that must be made for the genre to be accomplished successfully. The Schematic structure can be explained with respect to: constituency and functional labelling. Constituency, as its name suggests, means that things consist of or are built up out of other things. Most things are made up of layers, for instance, a book is made up of a number of chapters. In the same way, genre is made up of constituent stages. The stages are recognized by functional labelling, using either formal or functional criteria. Concerning the formal criteria, the researcher identifies the stages of the genre on the basis of their common linguistic items. The second type of criteria, that is usually adopted, is based on identifying the stages according to their functional roles (Eggins 2004).

Regarding the genre of lectures, Young (1994) suggested that they are composed of five stages, which she also called phases or strands. They are: content, examples, conclusion, evaluation, interaction. In assigning their labels, the researcher opted for functional criteria; which means that the name that she gave to each phase reflects its function. The stages recur throughout the lecture discontinuously. They are interspersed with each other resulting in an interweaving of threads as the lecture progresses.

In the content phase, the lecturer presents theories, models, and definitions. Thus, this strand reflects the lecture's purpose that is transmitting theoretical information. In the examples stage, the lecturer illustrates his theoretical concepts through some concrete examples. The purpose behind it is to further facilitate the students' comprehension. Turning to the conclusion strand, the lecturer summarizes the points which he has introduced. Regarding the evaluation strand, it is less frequent. It involves the lecturer's evaluation of the information which is about to be, or has been transmitted. Its main purpose may be to ensure that students know which approaches and views to adopt, and by implication, which to reject. Finally, the interaction phase indicates the extent to which the lecturer maintains contact with his audience, so as to make sure that what has been presented is understood. This can be done through entering a dialogue with the students by asking and answering questions.

Young (1994) added that while the conclusion and evaluation phases can be shared with other university genres, content; examples; and interaction stages especially mark university lectures. But a question which may be worth asking at this level is: how can the lecture's stages, including the lecturer's ideas, be organized? Section 1.3.2. will try to discuss this issue.

1.3.2. Lexical Phrases: Macro-organizers and Micro- organizers

The study of the structure of lectures has also focused on the different devices that lecturers may opt for so as to organize their lectures. Among the pioneers who have investigated this area of research are Nattinger and DeCarrico (1989, 1992). Their definition of lexical phrases is:

> **form/ function composites, lexico-grammatical units that occupy a position somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax…. Their use is governed by principles of pragmatic competence**. (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992: 36)

That is, lexical phrases are chunks of language of varying length. They are similar to lexicon in that they are stored in mind as single units, yet many of them consist of more than one word and many of them can, at the same time, be derived from rules of syntax. Additionally, such lexical phrases can be used to perform pragmatic acts, as for example the basic strings selected for the speech act expressing sympathy (I am sorry to hear that/ about…..). It is, thus, the pragmatic competence which accounts for the language user's ability to use lexical phrases appropriately in different situations. In this line of thought, a consideration of lexical phrases, or Widdowson's term formulaic chunks (1989), figures prominently in his discussion of pragmatic competence. He went so far to maintain that communicative competence is not just a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to appropriately employ such rules. It is much more

> **a matter of knowing the stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands.**
>
> (Widdowson 1989: 135)

Another important feature of lexical phrases is that of frequency. A lexical phrase occurs very frequently. For example, the linguistic items in an expression like have a nice day/holiday, or I don't think….., or would you mind…? commonly recur together in speech or writing (Richards and Schmidt 2002, Biber *et al*. 2002). They enable speakers to communicate fluently in real time, as argued by Willis (2003: 43) who wrote that: **"Much of the language we produce is made up not of individual words, but of strings of words which we carry around with us as fixed phrases"**. In support of this view, Warren (2000, qtd. in Schmitt and Carter 2004) calculated lexical phrases of various types in the discourse that they studied. They found that such a type of language items constituted 58.6% of the spoken English discourse and 52.3% of the written discourse. The main reason for the use of lexical phrases is the simple processing principle of economy of effort.

Finally, it may be worth mentioning that there are around forty terms in the literature to refer to lexical phrases or a subtype of lexical phrases (Wray 2002). Some of such terms are: formulaic language, formulaic speech, chunks, lexicalised phrases, multiword items/units, multiword lexical phenomenon, prefabricated routines and patterns, ready made utterances, recurring utterances, unanalysed chunks of speech, unanalysed multiword chunks. This section adopts the taxonomy of Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) according to whom lexical phrases can be described at two levels: form and function. At the former, they can be analyzed with reference to:

- Their length;

- ❖ Whether they have canonical or non-canonical shapes, i.e., whether or not their structure can be derived by the rules of syntax. For instance, the lexical phrase ‘you know’ is canonical as it confirms to a syntactic rule in English: subject + verb. Yet the lexical phrase ‘all in all’ is non-canonical for it does not have the typical lexical shape of the usual English syntactic pattern;

- ❖ Whether they are fixed or variable: lexical phrases like ‘for the most part’, ‘once and for all’ are frozen patterns in the sense that one cannot change them into, for instance, *‘for the least part’ or *‘in the least part’… or *‘once and there for all’. In sharp contrast to them, others have possible variations on their basic patterns. For example, ‘in short’ may be altered into ‘in sum’.

Based on these formal criteria Nattinger and DeCarrico’s (ibid.) distinguished between different types of lexical phrases: polywords, institutionalized expressions, sentence builders. Polywords are short phrases which function like individual lexical items. They can be canonical (like by the way, beside the point, in a nutshell) and non-canonical (examples include: so far so good, all in all, nevertheless). They allow no variability. Polywords like nevertheless, moreover, because, and all the different linking devices are considered as one-word items. They were previously poloywords phrases, but overtime they have become written as single lexical items and are perceived as such by English native-speakers.

Institutionalized expressions are lexical phrases of sentence length, which usually function as separate utterances. They are mostly canonical, in addition to being invariable. Institutionalized expressions include proverbs, quotations that language users have found efficient to store, formulas for social interaction, as for instance, how do you do? Give me a break, the public seldom forgives twice.

Sentence builders are lexical phrases up to sentence length which provide a skeleton for expression of a whole idea. They are for the most part canonical. They allow variation. Examples include: I think/ that, my point is that, let me start by/ with, that reminds me of, it seems (to me) that.

In addition to this form-based analysis, lexical phrases can be related to different functions which belong to three groups: social interactions, necessary topics, discourse devices (Nattinger and DeCarrico ibid.). Social interactions describe social relations and consist of two categories: conversational maintenance and conversational purpose. The first includes regularities of conversational actions describing how conversations *begin, continue, and end*. Examples include:

- opening a conversation with somebody(excuse me, hi+name, I didn't catch/get your name, how are you, what's going on?);
- checking comprehension (all right? Do you understand….?);

- shifting a topic(by the way, oh that reminds me of);
- shifting turns (so OK, could I say something here? Pardon me);
- closing(well that's all about it, I've got to got/do, I mustn't keep you any longer);
- parting(see you later).

The second category of social interaction lexical phrases– conversational purpose– encompasses some functions that describe the purpose of conversation. Some of these lexical phrases are: questioning (do you…? Is/are there/it/they…..); offering (model+pronoun+ verb phrase: can I help you? Would you like…..?); asserting (it is a fact/ the case that, I think/believe, it is said that); refusing (no way, I'm sorry about, of course not); expressing sympathy (I'm sorry to hear/about); expressing gratitude (I appreciate your thoughtfulness/ kindness, thanks very much/ a lot/ for).

Necessary topics are lexical phrases which mark topics about which a *language learner* is asked, or ones that are necessary in daily conversations. Instances are as follows: autobiography (my name is……….., I'm from………, I'm ………..years old); language (do you speak……..? how do you say/spell ………?I don't speak………very well, I speak …….); location (where is ……..?, to the right/left of……);

shopping (how much is ……..?) weather (it is going to…?); time (when is…?).

Finally, discourse devices connect the meaning and structure of the message. Instances of them entail: logical connectors: as a result (of), because (of), nevertheless, in spite of; temporal connectors: the day/week/month/year before, and then; fluency devices: you know, it seems, by and large, as a matter of fact, at any rate; exemplifiers: for example, it's like; relators: not only Y but also X, X has (a lot)/ doesn't have (much) to do with Y; evaluators: as far as I know/ I can tell, there is no doubt that, I am (not) absolutely sure/positive about, I guess; summarizers: to make a long story short, my point here is that.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (2000) also distinguished between interactional language that is present in conversations and is basically used for working out social relationships, and transactional language that is found in lectures and is mainly used for transmitting information. In this latter the lecturer may use two types of lexical phrases: macro-organizers and micro organizers. As the role of discourse devices is to organize transmitted information, they are called organizers.

Macro-organizers can be global or local. Global macro-organizers are lexical phrases that signal the introduction of a topic in the beginning, the shift to a new topic, and the summary of the topic. Local macro-organizers are those which also mark sequencing or importance of high-level information, but they do so at particular points within the overall framework set by the global macro-organizers. The categories listed in table 1.6. reflect this distinction between global and local macro-organizers along with examples of each category.

Global macro-organizers	Local macro-organizers
Topic markers: what I really wanted to talk about/tell you about was X; let's look at X; what do you think of X?; have you heard/ did you hear about X?; let me start with X; the first thing is…….; first of all.	Exemplifiers: to give (you) an example; for example/instance; in other words; it's like X; something like.
Topic shifters: OK, now (falling intonation+pause); that reminds me of X; and finally we have X; let me go from X to Y; by the way; this brings us to; this leads to; the next point is;	Relators: nonetheless; however; as a result of; because (of) and also; not only X but (also) Y; it has to do with X.
Summarizers: OK so; so then; in a nutshell; to tie this up; in short/summary; that's about it/all there is to it; in effect; to make a long story short; what I'm trying to say is .	Evaluators: I think/ don't think that X; as far as I know/I can tell; there is no doubt that; I'm absolutely certain/sure that; X might not work.

Table1.6. Examples of Macro-Organizers (Adapted from Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992)

It is worth pointing out, however, that that this is not an exhaustive list. The lexical phrases mentioned are just some examples. For a detailed list of lexical phrases in the English language, readers my consult *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* by Biber *et al.* (1999).

The lecturer may begin his lecture with a topic marker. Summarizers and evaluators may respectively be used to signal the lecture's phases of summary and evaluation. Then, the lecturer introduces the stage of examples through the use of exemplifiers. Whenever there is a shift to another topic, he may have recourse to a topic shifter.

Another type of discourse devices found in lectures is referred to as: micro-markers (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992). They indicate links between sentences, or function as fillers (i.e., they fill pauses and, thus, gives listeners more time to process segments of the lecture). There are different types of micro-organizers: segmentation (fillers): well, all right, Ok; temporal, which indicate temporal relationships within sentences. Examples include: at the time, after this, for the moment, eventually, then; causal, which indicate cause links between sentences (for instance: so, so that, because, therefore, that /which means); contrast, for contrastive relationship like: but, although, unless, emphasis.

Morell (2001) added another category of micro-organizers called: elicitation which includes lexical phrases that elicit information from the students to engage them in interaction. Instances of this category include: anything else, anyone else, what? Why is that? louder please.

This chapter has thus far been addressing research related to definition of lectures and their organization. In the remaining sections, the overriding concern will revolve around examining the processes which account for comprehension in lecture listening. As a starting point, however, there will be a review of the nature of language comprehension, including its different forms– listening comprehension and reading comprehension, and the difference between L1 listening and EFL listening.

1.4. COMPREHENSION PROCESSES

It is generally assumed that certain principles of comprehension apply to all forms of language comprehension, namely reading comprehension and listening comprehension. In this line of thought, Buck maintained that:

> **Many of the characteristics of listening comprehension are actually characteristics of all forms of language comprehension, and while listening … is unique in some respects, it also shares many characteristics with reading.** (2001: 31)

There may basically be two views concerning the nature of language comprehension. The first one had prevailed till the late 1960s, when comprehension was considered as a passive process in which comprehenders were simply assumed to be decoders of the spoken/written language (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006). This view can be attributed to two interrelated reasons. First of all, the underlying processes of comprehension are unobservable and, therefore, they were difficult to grasp and study. In listening comprehension, for instance, Weaver (qtd. in Morley, 1991: 82) pointed out to the importance of speaking merely because the speaker's **"behavior is overt and vocal,**

and he [the speaker] hears and notices his own behavior, whereas listening activity seems like merely being there− doing nothing." Secondly, this era was dominated by the behaviourist ideas that avoided speculation about the human mind and concentrated only on observable facts (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006). As a result, researchers accounted for comprehension as a stimulus-response pattern. With respect to listening comprehension, the listener's stimulus consisted in hearing the spoken words, and the response involved identifying and organizing those spoken words into sentences. The listener's main role was, consequently, simply based on the recognition and discrimination of sounds rather than understanding what was being listened to. Similarly, in reading comprehension the focus was "**chiefly on the nature of perception during reading and …the relation between stimuli as words and responses as word recognition"** (ibid.: 262).

By the end of the 1960s, however, the second view of comprehension started to emerge. It considers the act of comprehending as an active mental and cognitive process. This new understanding was brought about under the influence of Chomsky's innateness views (1957, 1965), which stated that children are endowed with an ability that helps them acquire their mother tongue. Within such a view, and with the emerging discipline of psycholinguistics, special emphasis was given to the mental processes involved in a comprehension act. As corollary to that, in 1969 the IAAL (International Association of Applied Linguistics) Conference, that was held in Cambridge (England), proclaimed several issues including the recognition that reading comprehension and listening comprehension are complex receptive skills and not merely passive ones (Morley 2001). Since then, researchers have become interested in exploring the intricacy of such complex skills.

Under this new view of comprehension, Field (2004) believed that comprehension in general is an active process that demands active engagement. The comprehender is seen as interacting with spoken/ written language and, thus, constructing its meaning. Throughout the process of meaning construction, the comprehender is free to impose upon the spoken/ written input his own: sense of what is or is not relevant and important, interpretation of what the speaker/writer intended, world knowledge.

When constructing meaning, the comprehender performs a number of operations at two levels: sentence, and discourse. At the former, the comprehender is involved in:

- ❖ extracting propositional information (the literal meaning) based on the spoken/ written language, through phoneme/letter processing, lexical processing, syntactic processing;
- ❖ making any necessary inferences to construct interpretations;
- ❖ enriching the interpretations by applying world knowledge;
- ❖ integrating the new information into his mental representation of the message so far. The incoming input should constantly be related to what has gone before in order to ensure that it is

consistent and relevant. This entails the ability to recognize the main ideas, to relate them with other ideas;

- ❖ monitoring comprehension in case of misunderstanding, by checking the reliability of what has been comprehended.

At the discourse level, the comprehender recognises the hierarchical structure of the spoken/written language as well as patterns of logic which link the different parts, and determines which parts are important to the speaker/writer or relevant to his own purposes (Field 2004).

These operations involve the use of two areas of knowledge: linguistic and content. The former includes knowledge of the language system: phoneme/letter, lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse structure. The latter involves knowing how the language is organized, how language is used in a particular society, and factual knowledge about the topic that is being tackled.

Both kinds of knowledge are necessary in the process of meaning construction, and the comprehender refers to whatever knowledge available in any order or even simultaneously. This interactive view of comprehension has been adopted by many researchers, including Field (2006); Eskey (2005) in the field of reading comprehension, and Peterson (2001); Buck (2001) in the area of listening comprehension, to name just a few. With respect to reading comprehension, Eskey wrote that it is now considered as an active, mental process in which:

> **a reader engages in the construction of meaning from a text, partly on the basis of new information provided by that text but also partly on the basis of whatever prior knowledge, …that reader brings to the task of making sense of the words on the page.** (2005:564)

Regarding listening comprehension, Buck (2001: 29) pointed out that **"meaning is not something in the text that the listener has to extract, but is constructed by the listener in an active process"**, hence, comprehension is an ongoing process of constructing an interpretation of what the spoken language is about **"based on whatever information seems relevant at that time."** (ibid.)

So far the focus has been on highlighting the nature of comprehension. As this research revolves around one type of listening comprehension– lecture comprehension, it is necessary to explore what distinctive features underlie these two forms of language comprehension.

1.5. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Research over the last two decades or so has shown that listening comprehension, as one form of language comprehension, has some features in its own right (Flowerdew 1994, Buck 2001). These characteristics can be grouped under two main headings: the nature of spoken language, and real-time processing. Firstly, spoken language is in the form of sounds, and individual sounds are very often indistinct because of some phonological modifications, such as assimilation. A related characteristic concerns stress and intonation that may convey important information, like the speaker's attitudes. Additionally, speech is syntactically different from writing. Secondly, listening comprehension usually takes place in real time, which means that once a spoken message is heard it may not be repeated. All these distinctive features will be tackled under sections 1.5.1. and 1.5.2.

1.5.1. Spoken Language

One aspect which is unique to listening comprehension is related to the nature of the mode of communication, that is spoken language. This section will try to review some of the main important ones: phonological modifications, prosodic features, rate of speech, and syntactic features.

1.5.1.1. Phonological Modifications

Phonemes are the smallest units of speech that can be produced and identified by speakers and hearers of a language. In normal speed speech, these units may change their features, according to a set of phonological rules. Some phonemes may be modified by those next to them, some may simply be dropped, others may be combined in complex ways. These phonological modifications vary from one language to another. In English, they encompass:

- Assimilation: it is what happens to the sound when it is influenced by one of its neighbours. It particularly becomes more similar to that neighbour;

- Elision: it refers to the omission of individual sounds;

- Intrusion: it is when a new sound is introduced between other sounds (Buck 2001). For example, in RP, the consonant sound /r/ is not pronounced at the end of the word ‘far’. But if the word is immediately followed by a vowel, as in ‘far away’, then it is realized between the two words.

1.5.1.2. Prosodic Features

Prosodic Features, stress and intonation, carry a great deal of communicative information. As regards stress it is a property of syllables which makes them more noticeable than others. Word stress and sentence stress are the most important types of stress in English. The former is the relative emphasis of the various syllables within a word. The latter is the relative emphasis of the words within an utterance. In English, the most important linguistic items in an utterance are given more stress, than the surrounding ones, so as to indicate the point the speaker is making.

Intonation is the variation in pitch that takes place within an utterance. As far as Crystal is concerned (1995), intonation has different functions. The most important ones include:

- Emotional intonation: it is used to express attitudinal meaning (delight, impatience, shock, anger, sarcasm, interest, …);

- Grammatical intonation: it is used to mark the grammatical structure in speech, performing, thus, a role similar to punctuation;

- Textual intonation: it is used to help larger chunks of discourse to contrast and cohere, like paragraphs in written language;

- Psychological intonation: it is used to chunk information into units that are easier to perceive and memorize,

- Indexical intonation: it is used as a marker of personal or social identity. For example, preachers, newscasters, sport commentators often use a recognizable intonation pattern.

1.5.1.3.Rate of Speech

Rate of speech is another important characteristic of spoken language. Tauroza and Allison (1990) investigated the typical speech rates of British speakers, at different situations: radio monologues, conversations and interviews intended to native speakers, lectures aimed at non-natives. Results of their investigation are outlined in the table below.

	Words per minute	Syllables per minute
Radio Monologues	160	250
Conversations	210	260
Interviews	190	250
Lectures to non-natives	140	190

Table1.7. Average Speech Rates for British Speakers (Tauroza and Allison 1990, qtd. in Buck 2001: 39)

Looking at the speech rates in the table, one can notice that interactive speech– conversations and interviews– are faster, while monologues are a little slower. Lectures to non-native speakers are much slower which may imply that lecturers slow down speech so as to aid comprehension.

1.5.1.4. Syntactic Features

In spoken language, clauses; sentences; and short phrases are referred to as idea units. These tend to be shorter, with simple syntax. They may be strung together, partly, by coordinating conjunctions like: and, or, but. Furthermore, spoken language is characterized by hesitations which are of two types: unfilled pauses that are pauses of silence; filled pauses where the speaker uses fillers like ‘um’, ‘mm’, 'ah'. All these make up thirty to fifty percent of what is said (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). Coupled with these hesitations there is the presence of redundancy. This is evident in repetition, restatement, redefinition, and paraphrase through expressions like: 'in other words', 'I mean that'. Also, speech tends to be more personal, with more emotional involvement and much less precision. Finally, written texts tend to be planned and, hence, more organised as well as denser, often using sophisticated vocabulary and complex syntax such as dependent and subordinate clauses, to convey more information.

To sum up, all the foregoing distinctive features make up the nature of spoken language, which is usually processed in real time as will be explained in the following section.

1.5.2. Real-time Processing of Spoken Language

Spoken language exists in real time rather than space. This has three interrelated implications. First, listeners do not have control over speech, which means that they do not have enough time to dwell on some parts, or backtrack. Second, listeners must process speech while it is uttered, at a speed that is determined by the speaker and that is often quite fast. Third, and as corollary to what has been said, the processes underlying listening comprehension must be automatic. In support of this view, Buck (2001: 6) argued that speakers speak very quickly:

> **This leaves little time to think about the precise meaning of each word, or the way clauses are structured, or to speculate what pronouns might refer to. The words are flying fast…, and in order to understand speakers at this speed, the listening processes must be entirely automatic.**

Automaticity involves a sequence of cognitive processes that is rapid and without active control or conscious attention. For listeners with controlled processing comprehension will suffer. As speech becomes faster, they will not have sufficient time for processing everything. Instead, they will start paying more attention to processing the literal meaning, and less attention will be given to making inferential processes to interpret what they are listening to (Lynch 1998).With the increased rate of speech, they will have no sufficient time to thoroughly process even the literal meaning and, therefore, they will start to miss some parts of what speakers say. Finally, at a certain speed, their processing will tend to completely breakdown, and so will their comprehension.

After reviewing characteristics of listening comprehension, it may be worth highlighting the difference between L1 listening and EFL listening.

1.6. FIRST LANGUAGE LISTENING AND L2 LISTENING

Although L1 and L2 listening use the same brain neurological processes, there are some developmental and functional differences between the two (Rost 2005). First, there is evidence of the influence of the so called “critical period”, which is identified as ranging from age two to puberty. After this period there are some constraints to learning a language. With regard to listening comprehension, some aspects of phonological and grammatical processes as well as some psychomotor skills for pronunciation are no longer sufficiently flexible for complete learning and achievement of native-like performance or competence. This often coincides with the time when L2 learning starts to take place− during or after puberty. Secondly, the need of language in addition to the amount and quality of input for a child acquiring their mother tongue are different from those of an L2 learner. For children, the social motive, which is self-expression, is stronger and access to input is virtually continuous. EFL learning is less linked to the child’s social motive, and learners seldom experience the same access to rich, understandable input (Rost 1994).

These differences may have a variety of manifestations in L2 listeners, some of whom will, for instance, have insufficient grammatical knowledge that will consequently make them reluctant to engage in inferencing, and to focus instead on immediate decoding. Another manifestation is related to word recognition which is considered as one of the most salient features of difficulty for L2 listeners (Rost 2005). Word recognition problems entail identifying but not knowing a word or not being able to recognize word boundaries.

1.7. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF LECTURE COMPREHENSION

Listening comprehension can be classified into different types according the listeners' purposes. First of all, it is worth mentioning that the first and the general purpose behind any type of listening comprehension is *comprehension*. Using Rost's words (2002:59), comprehension **"is considered to be the first-order goal ..., the highest priority of the listener"**. Comprehension may be global or local. Whilst the former entails understanding the main points, the latter concerns understanding other details. Within the first-order goal, listening comprehension varies according to whether listeners are involved in listening as a component of social action (conversational listening) with the purpose being to develop social relationships; or listening for information; or listening for pleasure (for example, listening to movies, radio); or listening in order to learn which includes listening to lectures, that is also called *lecture comprehension* (Richards 1983, qtd. in Buck, 2001).

A further classification of listening is provided by Rost (2002). It is instructional-based in the sense that it is based on how listening can be instructed and practised. The categorisation classifies listening into intensive, selective, interactive, responsive, autonomous, and extensive. The purpose of intensive listening is to decode the spoken input for language analysis. For example, students are asked to listen and fill in the gaps, with the aim being to focus on specific language features like verbs or adjectives. Selective listening takes place when the students listen to specific information. Interactive listening refers to **"a type of**

conversational interaction in which the listener takes a leading role in understanding, through providing feedback, asking questions and supporting the speaker" (ibid. 2002:190). The focus of responsive listening is the learner's response in the form of expressing an opinion giving back facts based on what was heard. Autonomous listening refers to independent listening without direct instruction from the teacher. Finally, listening for an extended period of time is called extensive listening. It includes listening for pleasure and *listening for academic purposes*. This latter is also known as *academic listening*, which

> **in its prototypical setting, entails the learner being responsible not only for listening to lectures, but also participating in discussion groups, interactions with tutors, collaborating with classmates on research and projects**. (ibid. 2002: 278)

Lecture comprehension is, therefore, one type of academic listening, which usually takes place at schools and university.

As far as comprehension processes of listening are concerned, Richards assumed that for each type of listening comprehension different processes are required. In conversational listening, for instance, he proposed a number of processes for constructing meaning (see table 1.8.).

1. ability to retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods
2. ability to discriminate between the distinctive sounds of the target language
3. ability to recognise the stress patterns of words
4. ability to recognise the rhythmic structure of English
5. ability to recognise the functions of stress and intonation to signal the information structure of utterances
6. ability to identify words in stressed and unstressed situations
7. ability to recognise reduced forms of words
8. ability to distinguish word boundaries
9. ability to recognise typical word-order patterns in the target language
10. ability to recognise vocabulary use in core conversational topics
11. ability to detect key words (i.e. those which identify topics and propositions)
12. ability to guess the meaning of words from the contexts in which they appear
13. ability to recognise grammatical word classes
14. ability to recognise major syntactic patterns and devices
15. ability to recognise cohesive devices in spoken discourse
16. ability to recognise elliptical forms of grammatical units and sentences
17. ability to detect sentence constituents
18. ability to distinguish between major and minor constituents
19. ability to detect meaning expressed in different grammatical forms / sentence types
20. ability to recognise the communicative function of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals
21. ability to reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants, procedures
22. ability to use real-world knowledge and experience to work out purpose, goals, settings, procedures
23. ability to predict outcomes from events described
24. ability to infer links and connections between events

25. ability to detect causes and effects from events

26. ability to distinguish between literal and applied meanings
27. ability to identify and reconstruct topics and coherent structure from ongoing discourse involving two or more speakers
28. ability to recognise coherence in discourse, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, given information, new information, generalisation, exemplification
29. ability to process speech at different rates
30. ability to process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections
31. ability to make use of facial, paralinguistic and other clues to work out meaning
32. ability to adjust listening strategies to different kinds of listener purposes or goals
33. ability to signal comprehension or lack of comprehension, Verbally and non-verbally

Table 1.8. Processes Underlying Conversational Listening

(Richards 1983, qtd. in Field 2008: 101-102)

With respect to lecture comprehension, Richards (1983, qtd. in Flowerdew 1994: 12) suggested the following list of processes: the ability to understand the purpose of the lecture; the ability to identify the topic of the lecture and follow topic development; the ability to recognize major relationships between units of the lecture (major ideas, supporting ideas, examples); the ability to identify cues that signal the structure of lectures; the ability to recognize key lexical items related to the subject/ topic; the ability to deduce meanings from words based on the context (i.e., inferencing); the ability to infer relationships (for example, cause, effect, etc); the ability to follow information from lecturer's speech (spoken language) and information derived from other media (like visually displayed materials presented by the overhead projector).

There is another taxonomy by Powers (1986), and it is based on a survey that the researcher administered to 144 faculty members in the United States of America. The results indicated the following list of processes are included: identifying the topic of a lecture; identifying major themes or ideas; identifying supporting ideas and examples; identifying relationships between ideas; following the spoken mode of lectures; comprehending key vocabulary.

The reader may notice that there are a number of processes that both taxonomies have in common. These include identifying the topic; main ideas; supporting ideas; examples; and the relationship between them, in addition to the ability to recognize key vocabulary.

Hansen and Jensen (1994) viewed Richards' and Powers' classifications to fall into two broad types of comprehension: global understanding and local understanding. The former calls for understanding the topic, major ideas, and purpose of the lecture. The latter focuses on understanding specific items within the lecture, such as identifying supporting details, key concepts, and examples.

1.8. LECTURE COMPREHENSION: STUDENTS' PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

The present section will describe some of the potential challenges that cause listeners' comprehension problems (inability to understand, partial understanding, or misunderstanding of the lecture's content). Then, there will be a review of the strategies that can be employed to face such challenges.

1.8.1. Barriers to Comprehending Lectures

When trying to understand lectures, students may be thwarted by a number of obstacles. These obstacles have been researched and documented in different empirical studies. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) summarized the existing body of research in this area, and some of the difficulties that they cited include: unfamiliarity with the structure of the genre of lectures, lack of prior knowledge about the content of the lecture, inability to cope with the lecture's speed of delivery. Each of these will be described as follows.

a. *Unfamiliarity with the structure of the genre of lectures*: knowledge of the different types of genres and their structures is technically referred to as discourse knowledge or formal schema− the plural is formal schemata, or formal schemas− (Richards and Schmidt 2002). In listening comprehension, Field (2008) identified a number of genres, which can be found and/ or incorporated in EFL contexts. They are: instructional (lectures and English-medium lessons), face to face (like conversations), distant but two-way (such as phone conversations), informative (for example news headlines), persuasive (TV advertisements), listening for pleasure (extended anecdotes, songs). These can also be classified as monologues, in which the speaker uses a spoken language for any length of time (like lectures and news broadcast), and dialogues which involves two or more speakers (as conversations). Each one of them has specific organisational patterns (Brown 2001).

Knowing the structures of particular genres is important in the process of lecture comprehension for the following reasons. First of all, formal schemata represent one type of knowledge that listeners need in their process of comprehension (see section 1.4. for types of knowledge needed in the comprehension process). The way this type of knowledge assists listeners is through analogy; that is, listeners think back to their experience of other listening genres that resemble the one in progress, and predict what is likely to happen. For example, if it is a lecture they will remember that a lecturer usually introduces new topics using specific words/phrases, and end them through a summary of the points raised. This leads to considerably higher levels of comprehension (Mendelsohn 1994, Flowerdew and Miller 2005, Field 2008).

Secondly, information in the educational genre of lectures is imparted in several ways, through theoretical content; exemplification; summarization; evaluation. If listeners are aware that the same information is repeated in a number of ways, and that if they miss it one time they can capture it later, they will be better able to cope with the transmitted information. With such schematic information learners' processing of the lecture will be greatly facilitated (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992, Mendelsohn 1994).

Thirdly, knowing the overall structure of the genre, that is being processed at the macro-level, compensates for many problems in understanding micro-level elements like sound discrimination, syntax, word and utterance level semantics (Flowerdew and Miller 2005).

Finally, students who engage in lecture listening are required to process relatively long stretches of spoken language featuring complexity of ideas and topics. Lexical phrases are intended, partly, to help the listeners predict the nature of upcoming ideas and information, and, thus, a student who is unable to recognize the importance of these signals will be faced with additional cognitive processing demands: having to deduce meanings and make inferences about the relations between them. Cowie (1992) pointed out that it is impossible to perform at a level acceptable to native users, in writing or in speech, without controlling an appropriate range of lexical phrases.

Formal schemata are, however, one type of schematic knowledge that listeners need. The second type is referred to as content schemata, which will be discussed the following section.

b. *Lack of prior knowledge about the content of the lecture*: this type of knowledge is known as content knowledge, or content schemata. It refers to the general knowledge related to a specific topic (Richards and Schmidt 2002). The critical role that prior knowledge plays in language comprehension has been articulated in the schema theory (ibid.).This theory posited that spoken language does not carry meaning in and of itself. Rather meaning occurs as a result of interaction between the linguistic input and the listeners' prior knowledge. Current views on listening also agree that prior content knowledge is very important in understanding the spoken language (Mendelsohn 1994, Rubin 1994, Buck 2001).This knowledge helps listeners form inferences during listening, and fill in gaps where decoding fails (Field 2008).

Rost (2002) identified different levels of comprehension based on the listener's content schemata:

- Non-understanding: it takes place when the listener is not able to activate any appropriate knowledge to understand the speaker;

- Misunderstanding: when the listener activates knowledge which is characterised by having significant mismatches to the speaker's mind (mismatches are differences at the conceptual level between the speaker's intention and the listeners' understanding);

- Partial understanding: the listener activates some schemata which have some overlap with the speaker's knowledge;

- Acceptable understanding: it occurs when the listener activates knowledge that includes central items in the listening input largely shared with the speaker;

- Complete understanding: it takes place when the listener activates knowledge that is thoroughly shared with the speaker.

In lecture listening, content knowledge is qualitatively different, in that listeners should have knowledge of the specialist's subject matter. In other types of listening, like conversational listening, more general content schemata are needed (Flowerdew, 1994). Among the empirical studies that investigated the role of content knowledge in understanding lectures are those of Chiang and Dunkel (1992); Schmidt-Rinehart (1994); Hohzawa (1998). Their subjects were respectively Chinese, Spanish, and Japanese English language learners. Findings of such investigations lend support to the fact that if listeners have schemata of the lecture content, they will be able to process information and achieve better comprehension of the lecture. Content schemata also include familiarity with the lecture's terminology. This latter was found to be important in Flowerdew and Miller'study (1992), as their students' unfamiliarity with the lecture's new terminology and concepts was one of the obstacles in effective processing of the lecturer's speech.

c. The *lecture's speed of delivery:* speech rate is another important factor in lecture comprehension. In the study already referred to by Flowerdew and Miller (ibid), the subjects were unanimous in rating the speed of delivery as the greatest obstacle in understanding their lectures. When asked why this should be so, the participants referred to the great amount of information processing required within a short period of time. This is consistent with Griffiths' claim (1990, 1992 as cited in Buck, 2001) that speed of delivery requires a great deal of work in a restricted time, and that comprehension is significantly better at the lowest speech rate and worse at the highest rates.

Another reason for the perceived obstacle of speech rate is suggested by Flowerdew (1994). In a review of some studies of speech rate in the area of lecture comprehension, he concluded that non-native speakers' reliance on decoding causes inability to deal with speech rate and, consequently, hinders their understanding of lectures. This is in contrast to native speakers who are able to apply inferences so as to compensate for gaps in their decoding. Using Flowerdew' words (ibid.: 22-23):

> **reliance on decoding is a hindrance to non-native speakers ability to cope with the incoming speech message, in contrast to the native speakers, who are able to apply inferential processing to make up for gaps in decoding.**

Therefore, non-native speaker comprehension is more hindered, than that of natives, by a faster speech. Among the studies that investigated the effect of speech rate is that of Sheri *et al.* (1997). The procedures involved giving the participants audiotaped or videotaped recording of lectures at different speech rates: 100, 150, 200 words per minutes. The results showed that comprehension increased as the speech rate decreased. Interestingly, speech rate also affected the subjects' affect, as the lower rate enhanced the perceived importance of the information presented in the lecture.

So far, this section has been concerned with some of the difficulties that learners may face when trying to understand lectures. The discussion will now be about the strategies that can be used in order to effectively process information in lectures, and overcome any barriers which may result in comprehension problems.

1.8.2. Lecture Comprehension Strategies

Over the last three decades or so, there has been growing evidence that language learners use specific ways to help them effectively process the target language, and get round the difficulties they encounter. Technically, these ways are referred to as strategies. The word 'strategy', comes from the ancient Greek word 'strategia', which means steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war. A dictionary definition views the term as a general plan of action that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. Purpose or goal- orientation is, hence, a feature that is found in any definition of 'strategy'. In the literature of language learning strategies, this distinctive feature, that is goal-directness, is found in almost all definitions of learning strategies. In this context, Oxford (2003: 9) wrote **"In our field, virtually all definitions of strategies imply conscious movement toward a language goal"**. This will be clearly shown in the following definitions.

Tarone (1983: 67) defined a language learning strategy as **"an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language"**. The goal expressed by Tarone in this definition is: to attain various competences in the target language, mainly, linguistic and sociolinguistic ones.

On the other hand, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:1) stated that learning strategies are **"the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information"**. This definition differs from Tarone's in two ways. First, it points out that strategies can be observable (behaviours) or unobservable (thoughts). Second, it expands the goals to include comprehension and learning of new information.

Finally, Oxford further expanded the goals to include aspects of learning and use of information, as well as the changing nature of learning once strategies are employed. She viewed language learning strategies as:

> **operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information [They are used by learners] to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.** (1990: 8)

To sum up, language leaning strategies are thoughts or behaviours that the individual learner makes use of in order to learn, comprehend and use information. Such strategies foster autonomy and further make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more transferable to new contexts.

Interests in studying language learning strategies go back to the late 1960s and the beginning of 1970s. At that time, researchers came to realize that language teaching methods and techniques failed to produce effective learning however sound they may have appeared in theory. To discover why, they must study the learner (Littlewood 1998), more precisely, characteristics of the good language learner. The pioneer in this field is Carton (1966, qtd. in Wenden 1987) whose study provided a detailed discussion of the strategy inferencing. Carton divided inferencing into three main kinds:

- Intra-lingual cues in which the cues are supplied by the target language. They are used when a learner already has some knowledge of the target language;

- Inter-lingual cues which are brought to bear on loans between languages, cognates and regularities of phonological transformations from one language to another;

- Extra-lingual cues in which the learner uses what he knows about the real world to predict what is said.

Following Carton, Rubin (1975) initiated research that focused on strategies used by successful language learners. The research results, published in 1975, included the following strategies:

- Communication Strategies: use of circumlocutions and gestures;

- Social Strategies: seeking out opportunities to use language;

- Cognitive Strategies: guessing, practicing, attending to form by analyzing; categorizing; synthesizing; monitoring.

In addition to these two studies, there are many other works which have investigated the various language strategies that learners employ.

One can briefly point out, however, that the work of the 1970s contributed to our understanding of learning through identifying strategies which contribute to learning, that is the cognitive strategies and social as well as communication strategies. Then the work of the Wenden (1982, 1986) added a new dimension to our understanding of learning strategies that is metacognition. Finally, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) provided the first clear contrast between cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, and suggested that certain strategies are linked to reading, writing, speaking, or listening.

In the field of foreign language listening, identification of strategies has been more conducted in transactional settings than in interactional contexts (Vandergrift 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003; O' Malley and Chamot 1990). An example of transactional contexts is university. Having recognized the importance of strategy use in such a context, some researchers have focused on the specific strategies that effective listeners employ for understanding a lecture. The rest of this section will review some of these studies.

For Mason (1994), a number lecture comprehension strategies can be identified. For example, relying on previous background knowledge in the subject matter; compensating with concentrated study of reading materials; attending an EFL support course; listening or seeking out American peers; watching television; learning about American culture. However, this classification of strategies is not adopted in the present research, because the sample of Manson's study (ibid.) comprised foreign language students studying in an English-speaking environment.

They were subjects from countries like Russia; Japan; China, who had to study in the United States of America.

Another series of investigations revolved around lecture comprehension strategies of students studying in their countries. Instances of such studies include: O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989), Flowerdew and Miller (1992) Rost (1994). In their empirical investigation, O'Malley *et al.* (1989) recruited 11 high school learners and designated them as effective or ineffective listeners. Using think-aloud protocols, the researchers found that effective listeners were more able to self-monitor about loss of attention, and to listen for more global and large stretches of the lectures (i.e. inferencing) instead of focusing on word-by-word decoding. They also found that effective listeners were more able to relate new information to old information which is pre-stored within learners.

Flowerdew and Miller (1992), on the other hand, reported on the findings of a study into the strategies that university students employed to overcome the difficulties they faced during lecture listening. The key finding was that listening to a lecture is a difficult task for which students may well be inadequately prepared. In order to overcome their difficulties, the participants used a number of strategies: pre-reading; post-reading; lecturer help; peer help; effort to concentrate harder; note-taking.

Finally, Rost (1994) claimed that the task for pedagogy is to help learners find ways to deal with the partial understanding and misunderstanding they experience during lectures. He suggested the following learner strategies to be instructed: self-monitoring; note-taking; building a lexical base for lecture instruction, which means generating lists of key terms for students to prepare prior the lecture.

Finally, Flowerdew and Miller (2005) suggested a list of strategies which are outlined in table 1.9. The strategies encompass the aforementioned strategies in the other studies along with other strategies. The list is based on Vandergrift's study (1997). It is worth pointing out, at this level, that the description of the strategies in the table is taken from Flowerdew and Miller (2005) on the one hand and Vandergrift (1997) on the other. The table shows that there are three kinds of strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective.

The first category involves planning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating one's own listening (Examples include: selective attention, comprehension monitoring, advance organisation, problem identification). Cognitive strategies revolve around direct manipulation of the learning material. They encompass strategies like inferencing, note-taking, elaboration, resourcing. Socioaffective strategies include interacting with others to assist learning, such as questioning for clarification, and using affective control like lowering anxiety.

Strategy	Description
Metacognitive Advance organization	Clarifying the objectives of the lecture listening and /or proposing strategies for handling it
Directed attention	attending to the main points of the lecture ignoring irrelevant distractions; maintaining attention while listening
Selective attention	paying attention to details
Comprehension monitoring	Checking one's understanding
Problem identification	Deciding what problems hinder comprehension;
Evaluation	Judging overall execution of the task and of one's strategy use
Cognitive Inferencing	Using information within the spoken message to guess the meaning of unfamiliar language items, predict outcomes or fill in information
Elaboration	Using content and formal schemata already stored in memory to predict outcomes or fill in missing information

Strategy	Description
Note taking	Writing notes during the lecture listening
Summarization	Making a summary
Resourcing	Using available reference resources of information, like books, articles
Socioaffective Questioning for clarification	Asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing
Cooperation	Learners working together
Lowering anxiety	Trying to relax
Self-encouragement	Positive self-talk(I can do it)

Table 1.9. Lecture Comprehension Strategies (adapted from Flowerdew and miller 2005, Vandergrift 1997)

Examples of the strategies that were investigated in the previously mentioned studies and are included in the table include: directed attention (concentrating very hard), inferencing, resourcing (pre-reading and post-reading), peer help and teacher help (asking questions for clarification and cooperation).

Finally, it may be worth clarifying the concept of study skills to distinguish it from lecture comprehension strategies. According to Wallace (2004), ‘study skills’ is rather a broad term which encompasses not just taking note from lectures, but also writing academic assignments, taking parts in academic discussions, reading academic texts, doing basic research, preparing for examinations.

1.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter draws on some theoretical stances in the field of lecture comprehension so as to address the concern of the empirical study, which is investigating learners' difficulties and strategies in lecture listening. The chapter is devoted to two main issues: the lectures' structure and comprehension processes. At far as the first issue is concerned, there may be a number of points which are worth remembering. First, lectures can be defined either as an academic spoken genre from the ESP point of view, or as an educational genre from a systemic functional linguistic perspective. The second view is rather adopted for reasons of feasibility of research. Second, being an educational genre, the main purpose of lectures is to transmit information in a way that facilitates comprehension. Third, this genre may be analyzed in terms of register configuration and schematic structure. The former involves field– the activity, tenor– the participants, and mode– the channel of communication. The latter entails the presence of interweaving phases which do not occur in any particular order and can re-appear throughout the lecture. Information in lectures is organized through some macro- and micro-organizers.

As for the second issue− comprehension processes− the main points that have been raised revolve around the nature of comprehension in general, then listening, and finally lecture comprehension. The first form of comprehension, as it is suggested, involves a process of meaning construction in which different types of knowledge are used: linguistic and content. Listening comprehension differs from reading comprehension in the nature of the input which is spoken. However, listening comprehension itself may differ according to the purpose of listening. Hence, one may identify types of listening comprehension, including lecture comprehension. Within this latter, EFL learners may face a number of difficulties, some of them are related to their formal and content schemata, and the lecturer's speech rate. In order to get over such barriers, the chapter suggests a range of strategies− metacognitive, cognitive, socioaffective.

The following two chapters will present in details the description and analysis of the case study that the researcher undertook in order to investigate the status of listening comprehension, as well as learners' lecture comprehension barriers and strategies in an EFL context, and more precisely in the first cycle of LMD.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDY: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

2.2. ELT SITUATION IN ALGERIA

2.3. THE SECTION OF ENGLISH

2.3.1. Listening Comprehension in the Official Programme of First-Year Students

2.3.2. Linguistics in the Official Programme of First-Year Students

2.3.3. Lectures at the Section of English

2.4. THE RESEARCH SAMPLE PROFILE

2.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.6. DATA ELICITATION METHODS

2.6.1. The Questionnaires

2.6.1.1. The Learners' Biodata Questionnaire

2.6.1.2. The Learners' Difficulties and Strategy Use Questionnaire

2.6.2. The Interviews

2.6.3. The Tests

2.7. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

2.8. THE PILOT STUDY

2.9. CONCLUSION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Research design and methodology issues are tactical decisions which establish the practicalities of research (Cohen *et al.* 2007). The decisions are based on answering questions like:

- What are the research questions?
- What is the style of the research? (for example, experimental research; case study; action research);
- What types of data are required?
- From whom will data be gathered (i.e., sample)?
- How will data be collected (i.e., research instruments)?
- How will the data be analysed?

In planning to answer these questions, the researcher addresses an important standard of research, which is feasibility; that is, whether it is possible to actually undertake the study. This necessitates taking into consideration whether it is feasible to answer the research questions and collect the data from the target sample, using the research instruments and procedures already selected by the researcher. Therefore, there must be a thorough understanding of the whole empirical study, including the sample's availability; the setting; budgetary issues, as limitations in these may result in the researcher's inability to undertake the investigation.

This chapter will provide an account of what decisions are made with respect to research design and methodology in the present investigation. The aim behind such an account is to meet another important standard of research, which is *replicability*. In this regard Brown (2004: 492) wrote that the standard of replicability requires the researcher to provide enough information about a study to allow other researchers to:

> **replicate or repeat the study exactly as it was originally conducted …[through] thorough and complete descriptions of: (1)the participants in the study and how they were selected, (2)the instruments used… (3) the procedures followed in collecting the data, … and analyzing the results.**

Thus, the researcher's proper presentation of a particular study should make it possible to the reader, who might be interested, to replicate the study, i.e., to do it again under similar conditions.

The first sections of this chapter will revolve around a description of where the study took place. They will include an account of ELT in Algeria in general, and at the Section of English, where the researcher undertook the study, in particular. Further points to be raised will be the status of listening and the use of lectures at the level of this section. Finally, the remaining sections will be devoted to the sampling, research methodology, research instruments and procedures that the researcher decided to opt for after the pilot testing.

2.2. ELT SITUATION IN ALGERIA

Prior to Algeria's independence, the French language dominated the educational system. After independence, the issue of what language to be chosen as the official language, and what language to be used as the language of education became of top priorities. As the Algerian policy decision makers strongly believed in the importance of recovering and maintaining the Arabo-Islamic identity, Arabic was selected to be the official language, as well as the medium of instruction. The latter decision was part of the language-in-education planning promoted through the gradual process of Arabisation, which started from the lower levels of education in the 1970s and was extended to higher education in the 1980's. Consequently, most education in the different levels has been conducted in Arabic. French has, since then, come to be considered as a first foreign language, and English as a second foreign language.

Concerning English, the teaching of this language in Algeria is introduced in the first year of middle school and continues till the last year of secondary school, i.e., for seven years. The Algerian learner starts the task of learning English with an already existing linguistic background knowledge of Arabic and French; that is, after having started to learn Arabic for five years and French for three years. The time allotted to the teaching of English in the middle school does not exceed three hours per week (see table 2.1.).

Number of hours per week				
Year Level / Subject	First	Second	Third	Fourth
English	3	3	3	3

Table 2.1. Learners' Weekly Time Allotment in the Middle School

In the secondary school, English is part of the curriculum in all the streams. Table 2.2 in the following page summarises the time devoted to the teaching of English in the different streams, namely scientific stream and literary stream.

In the context of both middle and secondary schools, ELT in Algeria has witnessed prominent developments and changes in terms of its roles, objectives, and syllabi. During the 1960's, it was the grammar translation method that underlied the teaching of English in Algeria. The method put emphasis on developing accuracy rather than fluency. This was done through the explicit teaching of grammar rules, and the use of translation to develop the pupils' lexis and writing. Instruction in listening and speaking was neglected.

During the 1970's and early 1980's, audiolingualism was introduced. The method stressed the teaching of the four skills in the following order: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In Practice and Progress, one of the textbooks used in Algeria at that time, the instruction in the syllabus stated: "nothing should be spoken before it has been heard. Nothing should be read before it has been spoken. Nothing should be written before it has been read." (Alexander 1967).

Level	Stream	Hours per week
1st year	**Scientific stream**	2
	Literary stream	3
2nd year	**Literary stream** Arabic literature and human sciences Islamic sciences Arabic literature and foreign languages	 3 3 4
	Scientific stream Natural sciences Exact sciences Technology	 3 3 3
3rd year	**Literary stream** Arabic literature and human sciences Islamic sciences Arabic literature and foreign languages	 3 3 4
	Scientific stream Natural sciences Exact sciences Technology	 3 3 3

Table 2.2. Teaching Load in the Secondary School

By the 1980's, Algeria had been involved in a large scale textbook-design programme, which aimed at introducing communicative language teaching. Some of the newly designed textbooks were: Comet, Newmidlines, and Spring. Communicative language teaching continued to be used in the Algerian middle schools until 2002. Since 2003, the competency-based approach has been implemented. Two years later it started to be adopted in secondary schools.

The aim of the competency-based approach is to inculcate learners with three kinds of competencies: interacting orally in English, interpreting oral and written messages, and producing oral and written messages. Therefore, learners should have three types of knowledge:

- Linguistic: learners should have this knowledge to help them carry on their foreign language learning;

- Cultural: pupils are to be exposed to different cultural contexts presented in English;

- Methodological: pupils should be assisted to expand their repertoire of language learning strategies.

These types of knowledge are integrated in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The competency-based approach, as a learner centred approach, assigns to language teachers roles which are different from those found in the traditional teacher centred approaches. The teacher is supposed to reflect on his teaching practices, give guidance, facilitate learning, be aware of the learners' needs including styles and strategies, and develop learners' autonomy.

The traditional teacher-centred approach	The competency-based approach
Holding guidance Providing knowledge Being authoritarian	Reflecting on what, why, and how to teach Giving guidance Facilitating the process of learning Being aware of learners' needs, styles; strategies Developing learners' autonomy

Table 2.3. Roles of the Language Teacher

In the textbooks of the middle school, listening is incorporated to practise some language functions, like greeting, and some pronunciation features, as intonation. The aim is also to develop the ability to listen for specific details. In one textbook, there is a listening lesson in which pupils are supposed to take notes from a short lecture.

In the textbooks of the secondary school, learners are often asked to listen for the main idea and for details, as well as predict and check hypotheses. Listening to practise language functions is a commonly repeated aim. Some pronunciation features are also instructed through listening activities. Note-taking is focus of two lessons. For each of the following strategies, one lesson is designed: inferencing and summarizing. Interestingly, one lesson is devoted to teaching learners the structure of lectures. More precisely, recognizing words which are used to link the different stages of a lecture.

Finally, although listening is supposed to be, officially, taught in the middle and secondary schools, it is still ignored by many teachers. This might be attributed to lack or absence of audio-visual materials, or/and teachers' ignorance of the importance of listening. All this makes them unwilling to invest more time in planning listening-based activities. Another reason might be the fact that listening comprehension is not included in the exams, including BAC and BEM. Additionally, Field wrote that **"When there is pressure on contact hours, it is often the listening session that is cut"** (2008: 1), hence, teachers who are usually in a rush to finish the official programme neglect instructing their learners into how to listen, or even to equip the pupils with the necessary strategies to be able to cope with the most widely spread instructional university medium− the lecture.

2.3. THE SECTION OF ENGLISH

The empirical phase of this research took place at the Section of English, in the department of Foreign Languages at the university of Tlemcen, previously called Abou Bekr Belkaid University. The university was founded in the mid-seventies. In 2007, the Section of English became a department. However, in 2010, it has, again, been given the status of a section that is part of the department of Foreign Languages. The students that enrol at this department are Baccalaureate holders.

Until 2009, the students had to go on a four-year course in order to get the 'Licence' degree, which is roughly equivalent to the BA degree (see table 2.4).

Year	Modules	hours per week
First	Oral Expression and Listening Comprehension	4/30
	Reading Comprehension	3
	Written Expression	4/30
	Linguistics	1/30
	Phonetics	1/30
	Grammar	4/30
	Arabic	1/30
Total		**21**
Second	Oral Expression and Listening Comprehension	4/30
	Written Expression	4/30
	Linguistics	1/30
	Phonetics	1/30
	Grammar	3
	British Civilisation	1/30
	British Literature	1/30
	American Civilisation	1/30
	American Literature	1/30
Total		**21**

Third	Oral Expression and listening Comprehension	1/30
		1/30
	Written Expression	1/30
	Sociolinguistics	1/30
	Phonetics	1/30
	Psychology	3
	Third World Literature	1/30
	British Civilisation	3
	British Literature	1/30
	American Civilisation	1/30
	American Literature	1/30
	Arabic	
Total		**19/30**
Fourth		
	Psycho-pedagogy	1/30
	TEFL	1/30
	Third World Literature	1/30
	Seminars in Civilisation	1/30
	Seminars in Literature	1/30
Total		**7/30**

Table 2.4. The Previous English 'Licence' Curriculum Modules

The goal of the course programme was to prepare the students for professional careers, namely carers in teaching at the middle or secondary schools. The four-year curriculum consisted of language skills (oral expression and listening comprehension as one modular course, reading comprehension, written expression), language study (linguistics and its sub-branches sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, phonetics, phonology, grammar), literature and civilisation (American, British, African or third world), TEFL, general psychology, educational psychology, and Arabic. In the fourth year, students used to choose to either write an extended essay or attend teacher training sessions to write a report. The 'licence' also offered opportunities to outstanding students to carry out post-graduate studies in linguistics, civilisation, literature, applied linguistics and TEFL, and ESP. These students are admitted after graduation or success in an exam.

Since 2009, this four-year programme has begun to, gradually, be replaced by the LMD system (i.e., Licence, Master, Doctorat*)* which is a reflection of the European award structure: bachelor/ master/ doctorate. It comprises three cycles: the first cycle corresponds to undergraduate awards (typically bachelor' degrees), the second cycle and the third cycle correspond to post graduate awards (typically master's degree and doctoral degree, respectively).

In Europe, the objective of implementing this system is to achieve convergence and harmonization of higher education systems, which will pave the way for increased mobility of students and researchers. According to Räisänen and Fortanet-Gómez (2008: 11), this **"possibility of moving freely across national borders will generate exchange, enhance mutual understanding, stymie racial prejudices and stimulate competition among institutions of higher education".** The European credit transfer system further helps achieve this goal, as study credits can be accumulated and transferred by students moving between different universities and across countries.

In Algeria, the authorities sought to harmonize university education with its European counterpart through adopting the LMD system. According to the official programme of the Section of English, other objectives are:

- Helping learners accumulate knowledge about the literatures and civilizations of the English world;

- Developing the necessary linguistic abilities which may assist learners to express themselves in English using both forms of language: oral and written. These abilities encompass: the ability to write, the ability to speak, and the ability to comprehend different types of genres within spoken and written discourse in English.

This course programme prepares our EFL students for careers in teaching English.

The first cycle, which is the concern of this investigation, is outlined in table 2.5. It consists of two terms which are organized according to three teaching units: fundamental teaching units; a teaching unit of methodology; and a cross-sectional teaching unit.

First semester		
Teaching units	**Hours**	**Credits**
Fundamental teaching units		
❖ Description of the English language		
Grammar	6	5
Phonetics	3	3
Introduction to linguistics	1h30	3
❖ Competences in the English language		
Techniques of Oral Production	3	5
Techniques of Written Production	3	5
Discourse comprehension (spoken and written)	3	3
❖ English cultures		
Introduction to literary studies	1h30	2
Anglo- Saxon Culture and civilization	1h30	2
Teaching unit of methodology		
❖ Research Methodology	1h30	1
Cross-sectional teaching unit		
❖ ICT	1h30	1
Total	***357***	***30***

Second semester		
Teaching units	**Hours**	**Credits**
Fundamental teaching units		
❖ Description of the English language		
Grammar	6	5
Phonetics	3	3
Introduction to linguistics	1h30	3
❖ Competences in the English language		
Techniques of Oral Production	3	5
Techniques of Written Production	3	5
Discourse comprehension (spoken and written)	3	3
❖ English cultures		
Introduction to literary studies	1h30	2
Anglo- Saxon Culture and civilization	1h30	2
Teaching unit of methodology		
❖ Research Methodology	1h30	1
Cross-sectional teaching unit		
❖ ICT	1h30	1
Total	***357***	***30***

Table 2.5. Teaching Units of First-year LMD Students at the Section of English

The fundamental teaching units involve the basic elements in the English language teaching. They revolve around modular courses that describe the English language, instruct the language skills, and introduce the English cultures. The unit of methodology introduces students into the principles of research methodology. Finally, the cross-sectional unit helps students accumulate computer-based knowledge.

For the second year, which includes two terms (the third and fourth semesters), almost the same teaching units are kept except with the unit of English cultures that a new module– called African civilisation, is added. At the end of the fourth semester, students choose to study either literature and civilisation or sciences of language for the fifth and sixth semesters. Both of these two subjects comprise four teaching units (see table 2.6).

Based on the table, the reader may notice that both subjects have three modular courses in common: educational psychology, research methodology, and project/training. As far as this latter in concerned, students are bound to choose either to write an extended essay or attend teacher training sessions to write a report. It may be worth pointing out that in 2012 some changes were introduced to this cycle. For instance, the module of research methodology was allotted one hour and a half.

Sciences of languages		**Literature and civilisation**	
Teaching units	**Hours**	**Teaching units**	**Hours**
Fundamental teaching units		*Fundamental teaching units*	
❖ *Description of language*		❖ Literary culture	
Theories of linguistics	3	Theories of literature	3
Phonology	3	Comparative literature	3
Morphology	3	General culture	3
❖ Application of Linguistics		❖ English cultures	
Psycholinguistics	3	English cultures	3
Sociolinguistics	3	Anglo-Saxon civilisations	3
TEFL	3	African civilisation	3
Teaching unit of methodology		*Teaching unit of methodology*	
Research methodology	3	Research methodology and Teaching	3
Discovery Teaching unit		*Discovery Teaching unit*	
Project/training		Project/training	
Cross-sectional teaching unit		*Cross-sectional teaching unit*	
Educational psychology	3	Educational psychology	3

Table 2.6. Teaching Units of the Third-year LMD Students at the Section of English

Students who graduated in 2012 had the opportunity to carry on master studies either in language studies or literature and civilisation. Some of the modules of language studies were: TEFL and language acquisition, language and linguistic theories, language in society, and

ESP. As regards the second major, it encompassed modular courses like: American civilization, British civilisation, and women writers. Both majors had in common the modules of global issues, Arabic language and culture.

As for the teaching materials, in addition to the traditional teaching materials: classroom, chalk, blackboard.., the Section of English is equipped with two language laboratories, and two computer rooms.

Finally, regarding the English proficiency of the Algerian student, Hamzaoui (2006) pointed out that it is still found to be lacking in the foreign language competence. Citing from Bouhadiba (2000), she attributed this problem partly to the fact that the Algerian teacher seems to be lacking qualified ELT professionalism. Teaching is often undergone hastily with no suitable teaching materials or adequately trained teachers.

2.3.1. Listening Comprehension in the Official Programme of First-Year Students

In the previous BA curriculum, listening was included with oral expression under the title of 'Oral Expression and listening Comprehension'. Although, the number of hours allotted to the teaching of this modular course changed since 2008 from three hours to four hours and a half, the same goals had been kept. According to the curriculum of the department goals, the aim of incorporating listening comprehension was to help students improve and develop comprehension of spoken English. The students should become able to:

- Follow and grasp large sketches of speech at normal speed;

- Comprehend the structural arrangement of oral discourse;

- Recognize style as indicated by stress and intonation patterns;

- Perceive and interpret meaning expressed by intonation patterns such as the speaker' s attitudes, feelings and intentions;

- Extract the literal meaning from what is listened to,i.e. to be able to identify the topic, general meaning, and to be able to summarise a passage;

- Draw the inferential meaning from the literal meaning.

According to this curriculum, those objectives can be achieved by merely exposing EFL students to different forms of speech. Based on this programme statement one can, then, draw the conclusion that listening comprehension was not systematically instructed. Lecture comprehension was not taught too. Regarding the first conclusion, it is clear that there was no systematic attempt to instruct listening comprehension. The statement that exposure to listening materials would lead to developing this skill implies that a traditional product approach had been used, which is often criticized as being an approach that tests learners and does not instruct them into how to process the aural input (For more detailed information about this methodology the reader may go to section 3.2.3). Mendelsohn explained how this traditional methodology is applied in the classroom saying that:

> **a traditional listening course, if such a component of the second language (L2) course curriculum existed at all, took the form of a substantial amount of listening followed by questions, but with no attempt at training the learners how to go about getting at the meaning.** (2006: 76)

Secondly, it is evident from the above stated objectives that there was no goal concerning teaching students lecture comprehension, though lectures represented one of the main classroom genres through which EFL learners accumulated content knowledge of many modular courses.

Within LMD, speaking had become to be instructed under the name of techniques of oral production. In the programme of this modular course, that is shown in table 2. 7., there is no direct reference to listening comprehension. The bulk of the programme mainly revolves around language functions.

First semester	**Second semester**
1. Introducing 2. Describing 2.1.Describing a person 2.2.Describing a place 2.3.Describing an object 2.4.Describing a process 3. Narrating 3.1.Telling a story 3.2.Narrating an event 4. Instructing 4.1.Giving instructions 4.2.Prescribing	5. Making Requests 6. Narrating 6.1. Telling a story 6.2. Narrating an event 7. Instructing 7.1. Giving instructions 7.2. Prescribing

Table 2.7. Speaking as should be Instructed in the Section of English

Rather, listening had officially become incorporated within discourse comprehension (see table 2.5). The programme of this modular course is displayed in the following table.

Lessons	Materials and techniques
1.Country and People	Text and exercise
2.The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Text and exercises.
2.1. England	Text and exercises, term papers about lady Diana.
2.2. Wales	
2.3.Scotland	Text and exercises, term papers.
2.4. Northern Ireland	Text and exercises.
3. Conclusion about UK	Text
4.Historical Events (UK)	Text and exercises,
5. Paragraph about UK	compound sentences
6. Do the English speak English?	
7. Idioms	
8. The Royal Family	Exercises
9. Wedding Ceremonies in Britain	
10. Superstitious Beliefs about Britain	Plays, games, songs: the whole year

Table 2.8. The Programme of Discourse Comprehension for First-Year LMD Students

The reader can clearly notice that there are no attempts to systematically instruct listening comprehension, or even lecture comprehension though lectures represent one of the means of delivering information to students in many modular courses. Most of the materials consist of reading texts followed with exercises. Plays as well as songs are the only auditory materials which are included, and there are no stated goals concerning the teaching and learning of listening comprehension. Finally, the content of this course is similar to that of the previous four-year curriculum programme.

To sum up, unlike the other language skills listening comprehension has never been recognized as a modular course in the Section of English. Integrating this skill with other skills may have two implications. First, it might confirm Medelsohn's point of view (1994) that in spite of the acceptance of the importance of listening comprehension for EFL learners, the skill is still somewhat neglected in many educational programmes. Second, it may be that programme developers believe in integrated skills approach, which was explained by Field in terms of its strongest form and weak form. The former entails: **"switching quite frequently from one skill to another: dedicating, for example, 15 minutes of a one-hour lesson to each of the four skills in turn."** The latter **"requires learners to employ two or more of the skills in activities that share a single topic or similar features of language"** (2008:73).

One drawback of this view of skills integration, however, is that there is a danger that the approach will deflect attention away from the listening skill to be practiced.

A further remark which concerns listening comprehension is that though it has been included with other modules, it has never been developed systematically, which may reinforce the aforementioned disadvantage of skills integration, and reveal that the Section of English at Abou Bekr Belakid university appears to be unaffected by recent developments in listening instruction (as a traditional approach seems to be adopted in the previous BA programme).

A final point that may be worth emphasizing, at this level, is that lecture comprehension has never been an *official aim* to be systematically instructed; though lectures are used to assist learners accumulate content information in many modular courses, including linguistics. This probably implies that no needs analysis has been carried out to assess what students need in listening comprehension, at the Section of English. As far as Mendelsohn is concerned, this is one of the problems which often prevail in listening instruction across language courses, where it is generally noticed that "**teachers either do not carry out a needs analysis at all, or they pay lip-service to the idea but nothing more than that"** (2006: 78).

Since the present case study focuses on linguistics, the following section will be devoted to a description of such a module.

2.3.2. Linguistics in the Official Programme of First-Year Students

Linguistics is a modular course that is taught once a week during the first two years of LMD. During the third year, only students who choose sciences of language will study linguistics. In the official programme, students are to be introduced, first, to definitions of concepts related to language and linguistics. Then, the focus is on the history of linguistics starting from traditional language studies to structuralism and eventually generative transformational grammar. At the end, semantics is dealt with. Lectures are the main medium through which linguistics is taught. Finally, it may be worth mentioning that the content of this programme, including the sequencing of the topics, is the same as the one of the previous four-year curriculum BA.

As many modules are mainly lecture-based, it may be important to highlight a brief description of different lecturing styles in the Section of English.

2.3.3. Lectures at the Section of English

Language teaching/learning occurs primarily through two media: speech and writing. At university level, spoken language displays a variety of genres, one of them is that of lectures (see chapter one, section two). In fact, with some modular courses lectures are the most common genre for delivering information. The reason behind this may be the fact that this genre is, from the practical point of view, useful with overcrowded classes which is the reality of today's universities. At the Section of English, lectures are used at all levels in the modules of linguistics– including its sub branches sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics- literature, civilization, psychology, and research methodology.

Some lecturers adopt a reading lecturing style: they either read the lecture, or deliver the lecture as if they were reading it. In both cases, they spend the session dictating their lectures with no, or very minimum, interaction with their students. The second lecturing style, that is less frequent, is the conversational one in which lecturers deliver the lecture from notes with some interactions with the students. Some other teachers adopt this style and, at the same time, use dictation.

So far, there has been a description of the teaching/learning situation related to the context where this empirical work was undertaken. The following sections will further get down into the nitty-gritty of the investigation in respect of sample, methodology, instruments, and procedures.

2.4. THE RESEARCH SAMPLE PROFILE

The subjects participating in this research comprised students and teachers. First-year LMD students studying at the Section of English, in Abou Bekr Belkaid university, were selected using convenience sampling. This latter is based on the selection of learners who happen to be available for the study (Mackey and Gass 2005). The sample began with twenty-two learners attending lectures of linguistics; however, the group for analysis comprised twenty-one. The reason is that one participant was eliminated as he did not attend the session during which the learners' difficulty and strategy use questionnaire was administered. The following table shows characteristics of these learners.

Factual information	Frequencies	Percentages
Number of Years in Learning English:		
Eight years	14	67%
Seven years	07	33%
Branch of Secondary School Studies:		
Literary stream	15	71%
Scientific stream	06	29%

<u>Table 2.9.</u> The Research Sample Profile

The table indicates that the students' learning experience of English ranged from seven to eight years. Their branches of secondary school varied, but the majority studied under the literary stream.

In addition, five teachers were selected from the same section, using a stratified random sampling procedure. The researcher divided the population into two strata: teachers of discourse comprehension and those of oral production. The reasons for selecting these two modules are:

1. the programme of the Section of English includes the teaching spoken discourse within discourse comprehension;

2. Some teachers of oral production usually insist on introducing listening to their students.

Among four teachers of discourse comprehension, only two accepted to participate. Amongst five teachers of oral production, three were included in the sample of this study because they usually make the point that they instruct listening comprehension in this modular course. The teachers' teaching experience varied:

- *Teacher 1*: she taught English for six years, and discourse comprehension for three years.

- *Teacher 2*: he taught English for twenty-five years (twenty years in the secondary school and five years at university). He taught discourse comprehension for one year.

- *Teacher 3*: He taught English for fourteen years, and speaking for fourteen years too.

- *Teacher 4*: she instructed English for fifteen years and speaking for three years.

- *Teachers 5*: she taught English for seven years; she instructed speaking for six years.

2.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology that the researcher opted for in this dissertation was case study research. It is defined by Mackey and Gass (2005) as a detailed description of a single case. A case may be a child, a class, a school, or a programme. Unlike the experimenter who manipulates variables to determine their cause-effect relations, the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of a case, so as to see the effect of the independent variable(s) on the dependent variable(s) which he is investigating without any intervention. A variable can be considered as a feature or quality that varies (Mackey and Gass 2005). An independent variable is the one which causes, in part or in total, a particular outcome. A dependent variable is caused, in total or in part, by the independent variable (Cohen *et al.* 2007). A third type of variables is known as moderator variable, which is a type of independent variable that the researcher chooses so as to determine if the relations between the independent and dependent variables can be changed or modified by such moderator variable (Brown 1988).

The aforementioned research questions of this study revolve around the influence of difficulties and strategies of students on their level of lecture comprehension. The mediator variables are learners' learning experience and the instructional methodologies in the Section of English.

The relationship between these variables was investigated using mixed methods research which is defined as "**collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or**

series of studies" (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007: 5). The central premise behind it is that **"the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone"** (ibid.). The mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying research problems, as researchers are enabled to use all the methods of data collection available rather than being restricted to those methods typically associated with either qualitative or quantitative inquiry. It also provides the strengths that offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies: words can add meaning to numbers and numbers may be used to add precision to words. Therefore, combining qualitative and quantitative paradigms can produce a fuller portrait of the phenomenon under focus.

Such combination should, however, be in a principled way so as to have a research design that is persuasive, rigorous, and of high quality. Hence, when engaged in mixing qualitative and quantitative research, there are some decisions which concern choosing the appropriate type of mixed method research. They involve: (1) the relative priority of the strands, (2) the timing of the strands, and (3) the procedures for mixing the strands. A strand is a component of the study which encompasses: posing a question, collecting data, analysing and interpreting data (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011).

Priority refers to the relative importance and emphasis of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The researcher may use a qualitative priority, or a quantitative priority, or an equal priority. The timing refers to the time when the strands occur. Concurrent timing is when the researcher implements strands during a single phase. Sequential timing occurs when one strand takes place after another one. Finally, there are different ways of integrating the data, like embedding qualitative and quantitative data within a traditional design (such as a case study or ethnography).

To sum up, the mixed methods researcher is supposed to:

- collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data;
- mix (or integrate or link) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them, or sequentially by having one build on the other;
- give priority to one or to both forms of data;
- use these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a study.

In the present research, the researcher designed a study which comprised two concurrent phases: one related to students and another one focussing on teachers. Both types of data were given equal priority, and were embedded within the larger design of case study.

The following section will be devoted to the methods employed in this case study.

2.6. DATA ELICITATION METHODS

Findings in EFL/ESL research are highly dependent on the data collection measures used. The choice of one measure over another is, partly, dependent on the research questions asked. In this context, Mackey and Gass wrote: **"research questions to a certain extent dictate a particular method"** (2005: 45). It may be worth stating, at this level, that the concept of research methodology is different from the term research methods (also called instruments or tools). The former is used to describe the types of research (also referred to as styles of research) like experimental research, case study, action research. The latter refers to ways that the researcher uses to collect data from the target sample. Examples include questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation.

As far as this case study is concerned, a number of research methods were employed to answer the different secondary research questions (see table 2.10). The interview with the teachers attempted to investigate the first research question which revolved around the status of listening comprehension within the LMD system.

For the second research question, whose main purpose was to find more about the students' experience in lecture comprehension, a questionnaire was used. In order to answer the research questions dealing with EFL learners' difficulties and lecture comprehension strategies two instruments were employed: a questionnaire and a test. Finally, a second test was administered to investigate the fourth research question. This latter sought to measure the learners' comprehension of their lectures.

Research Questions	**Research Instruments**
What is the status of listening comprehension within LMD?	Interviews for teachers
What is our EFL learners' experience in listening and lecture comprehension?	Questionnaire for learners
What might our EFL learners' difficulties be in understanding their lectures of linguistics?	Questionnaire, test for learners
Do our EFL learners have the necessary strategies which assist them in comprehending their lectures of linguistics?	Questionnaire for learners
Do our EFL learners attain successful comprehension of linguistics lectures?	Test for learners

Table 2.10. Research Questions and Instruments

The remaining of this section will provide more details regarding these data collection measures.

2.6.1. The Questionnaires

One of the most common methods of data collection in ESL/EFL research is the questionnaire. Brown (2001) defined the questionnaire as any written instrument that presents the respondent with a number of items, in the form of questions or statements, to which he reacts either by writing out his answers or selecting them from among existing answers. Broadly, this instrument yields three types of data about the respondent: attitudinal, behavioural, and factual (Dörnyei 2003). They are described as follows:

- Attitudinal information: when the items of the questionnaire revolve around the respondents' attitudes, beliefs, opinions, interests;

- Behavioural information: when the items seek to find out what the respondents regularly do or have done, emphasising actions; habits; life-styles. Strategies inventories are perhaps the most well known example of this type of data in the field of language teaching and learning;

- Factual information: when the items are used to find out more about the respondents' characteristics and facts. Examples include: demographic characteristics (age, gender, and race) the amount of time spent in a foreign language environment, level of education, occupation, and any other background information that may be relevant in interpreting data.

Additionally, the items of the questionnaire can be either closed or open ended. A close-ended item is the one that prescribes the range of responses from which the respondents may choose. It can be dichotomous (i.e., yes/no question), multiple choice, rating scale. Mackey and Gass (2005) pointed out that closed items can lead to answers that are easily quantified and analysed.

The second type of items− open ended enables the respondents to write a free response in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses. The researcher simply puts the open ended item and leaves a space (or draws lines) for a free response. Open items can be: sentence completion items (for example, effective listeners should…………………………………………………), specific open questions (like, what are characteristics of effective teachers?), and clarification questions (Dornyei 2007) which are used to ask the respondent for further explanations. The following example of a clarification item is taken from Dornyei (ibid.: 48):

If you rated the course book you are using as "poor" or "very poor, " please briefly explain why. Write your answer here:…………………………………………………

Open ended items allow the respondents to express their ideas in their own manner and may, thus, result in more detailed, insightful, and even, unexpected data.

Questionnaires need not be solely closed or entirely open ended, but they can blend different types of items. However it should be pointed out that the following items should be avoided (Brown 2001):

1. Negative items, like “spelling words in English is not difficult for me”, are confusing and, hence, should not be included;

2. Double-barrelled items that ask two or more questions at the same time. For example: “in the classroom we should spend more time on reading and less time on speaking”;

3. Embarrassing items that the respondents may find embarrassing to answer, for social or cultural reasons. For instance: “what is the literacy level of your parents?”

As regards the lay out, the questionnaire should not be compressed (Cohen *et al.* 2007), especially if it is large: a questionnaire with plenty of space for questions and answers is more encouraging to the participants. It should not contain more than six pages (Dornyei 2007) Furthermore? the numbering of the items also affects the clarity of the questionnaire. In this context, it might be useful in the case of a relatively long questionnaire if it is broken down into subsections with headings. For Cohen *et al*. (2007: 339) this will **“indicate the overall**

logic and coherence of the questionnaire to the respondents, enabling them to 'find their way' through the questionnaire". The clarity of the overall structure of the questionnaire can also be maximized through the use of colours for instructions and subtitles. Under the current investigation, two questionnaires were used: the learners' biodata questionnaire and the questionnaire of learners' difficulties and strategy use. They will be discussed in the following sections.

2.6.1.1. The Learners' Biodata Questionnaire

Biodata refers to the basic information related to the participants (Mackey and Gass 2005). Examples of biodtata are: the participants' ages, gender, and first languages, the participants' familiarity with other languages, the amount of prior EFL study, and the type of prior learning experience. The information to be collected is dependent on the goal of the study. Reporting sufficient data about the participants is supposed to allow future researchers to evaluate, and, possibly, replicate the study (ibid. 2005).

In this case study, the purpose of using the biodata questionnaire is two fold:

- To inform the reader about the context in which the results could be generalised (see section of limitations):
- To collect some factual and attitudinal information about the participants which might be relevant in data interpretation.

This questionnaire comprised eight items. Items one to seven sought to investigate some factual information concerning the participants. More precisely, they attempt to find out about the participants' previous learning experience. The last item revolved around attitudinal information,i.e., the participants' beliefs regarding whether they find it easy to understand their lectures. Finally, the questionnaire was a mixture of close-ended and open-ended items. The first two items were specific open questions. Items three, four, five, six, seven were dichotomous. There was a multiple choice item under item six (i.e., 6.1.). Question eight was a rating scale, and eight point one (i.e., 8.1.) referred to a clarification question.

2.6.1.2. The Learners' Difficulties and Strategy Use Questionnaire

As its name implies, this second questionnaire was opted for to search for the learners' difficulties and strategy use in lecture comprehension– factual and behavioural information. It was divided into two Parts. The first part dealt, mainly, with the participants' problems in understanding lectures of linguistics. In this context, three difficulties were under investigation: lack of content knowledge, lack of formal schemata, and lecturers' rate of speech. As regards the type of items adopted in this part, they were a mixture of closed and open-ended. Items a, b, c were rating scales that required the students to make evaluative judgements by marking one of a series of categories organized into a scale. The points in the scale indicated different degrees of frequency. These points were: *never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *always*. Hence, the subjects were to rate how often they faced such difficulties. The last item (d) in the first part was an open-ended one which asked the participants to state any other difficulties they may be facing.

The second part of this questionnaire comprised three different sections, which are summarised in table 2.11. Each section aimed at investigating a specific type of lecture comprehension strategies. Section one looked for the participants' metacognitive strategies. Section two sought to identify the subjects' cognitive strategies. Finally, section three was devoted to the socio-affective strategies that the sample may employ.

Throughout these sections, there were some close items, namely, rating scales. Some other items were open-ended, specifically, clarification items which were included for the purpose of cross-validating the findings of the rating scales. For example, the rating scale in 'item b' of 'section I' was about the metacognitive strategy advanced organization. It included a clarification item which was added to check against the data that rating scale would yield. If the participant's answer reflected advanced organization, then the researcher would consider the participants as having this strategy.

Items	Strategy type
Section I	***Metacoginitve strategies***
Item a	Evaluation
Item b	Advance organization
Item c	Comprehension monitoring
Item d	Selective attention
Item e	Directed attention
Item f	Problem identification
Section II	***Cognitive strategies***
Item a	Inferencing
Item b	Note taking
Item c	Summarization
Item d	Resourcing
Item e	Elaboration
Section III	***Socio-affective strategies***
Item a	Questioning for clarification
Item b	Cooperation
Item c	Self-encouragement
Item d	Self-encouragement
Item e	Lowering anxiety

Table 2.11. Lecture Comprehension Strategies as Presented in the Questionnaire

It may be worth mentioning that the points in the rating scales were assigned frequencies, from never to always. The purpose was to further help the participants choose the appropriate point in the scale. In order to assist the researcher in undertaking quantitative analyses, the researcher assigned the scales numbers: from zero to twenty. Finally, the questionnaire ended with an open item which sought to uncover any other strategies that students may have in their repertoire.

2.6.2. The Interviews

Interviews represent another type of data collection methods often used by EFL researchers. The literature of research methodology identifies a number of different interview types. These are: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured.

In the structured interview, the researcher follows a pre-prepared interview guide which contains a specific set of questions to be answered by every interviewee. In other words, the sequence and the wording of the questions are determined in advance, and no elaboration is allowed in either the questions or the answers. This type of interviews can particularly be used when a written questionnaire would in theory be appropriate except that for the reason that a written format is not feasible, for instance because of low level of literacy among the participants (Dornyei 2007).

The other extreme is the unstructured interview. It simply asks respondents to discuss a certain area of interest, and it provides them with freedom of expression. No detailed interview guide is prepared in advance, although the researcher may think of a few (1-6) opening questions, also called grand tour questions (ibid.). During the interview the researcher may ask an occasional question for clarification, but interruptions are kept to the minimum. This kind of interview is most appropriate when the study focuses on in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, or when an account of how a phenomenon has developed is required.

Concerning the semi-structured interview, it requires the researcher to use a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to prompt and probe for more information. In this context, Dornyei wrote: "**Although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on issues raised in an exploratory manner"** (ibid.: 136). Prompts are used by the interviewer to explain topics or questions. Probes, on the other hand, enable the interviewer to ask the participants to provide details and clarify their responses, thereby addressing richness and depth of response. Cohen *et al.* (2007) cited different ways of probing: follow-up 'why' question ; repeating the question; repeating the answer in a questioning tone, showing interest and understanding; asking for clarification or an example; pausing. Semi structured interviews are suitable when the researcher has a good enough review of the phenomenon, but does not want to use ready-made response categories that may limit the depth of the interviewee's responses (ibid.).

There are three types of items that can be used in interviews (Cohen *et al.* 2007):

a. Fixed alternative items: they ask the participants to select from two or more alternatives. An example is dichotomous items (yes/no or agree/disagree), and sometimes a third alternative, like ‘do not know’, can be added;

b. Open-ended questions: they do not require selection from a given set of alternatives. Rather the respondents can answer the question using their own words. Using Kerlinger’s words **“those that supply a frame of reference for respondents’ answers, but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expressions”** (qtd. in Cohen *et al.* 2007: 357);

c. Scale items: as their name may suggest, they require respondents to indicate the degree of opinion (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) or the rate of frequency (from never to always). Recently, scale items have been used with open-ended questions so as **“scales scores can be checked against data elicited by the open-ended questions”** (ibid.: 358)**.**

Finally, researchers should be aware of the potential drawbacks of interviews. Mackey and Gass (2005) stated that this research instrument may involve selective recall and memory loss. There is also the danger of the so-called halo effect: this refers to what happens when the interviewees pick up cues related to what they think the interviewer want them to say, which will potentially influence their responses. In order to address these concerns, Mackey and Gass (ibid.) suggested that the researcher:

1. keeps silent for a short while, or says “anything else” rather than accepts the first answer as the final complete response;

2. mirrors the interviewees’ responses by repeating them neutrally to provide an opportunity for reflection and further input;

3. makes the interviewees as comfortable as possible. This can be done through beginning with a small talk, and /or by using the respondent’s mother tongue whenever a communication problem arises or when the respondent so prefers.

Arksey and Knight (1999) added that the interviewer should also: avoid giving signs of approval or disapproval of the participants’ responses ; repeat questions at the participants ’s request ; move on to another question without anger if a participant indicates unwillingness or inability to answer the question; avoid double-barrelled questions (asking more than one point at a time); avoid assuming that the respondent has the required information.

Furthermore, in order to get the necessary information from the subjects, the reasons for the interview should be explained. According to Dornyei (2007), understanding the purpose of the questions will increase the motivation of the respondents to respond openly and in detail.

Considering the recording of the content of the interview, there are two ways: note-taking and tape-recording. The former involves recording the central issues in the interview. Though analysing summarizing data from notes can be easier, it is often very difficult to take note while listening and the **"researcher does not have an objective word-for-word record of what was said"** (McKay 2006: 56). Using the tape recorder may be more appropriate as it preserves the respondents' actual utterances, thus, providing the researcher with **"an objective record of what was said that can later be analyzed."** (ibid.:55-56).

In the present case study two semi-structured interviews were employed, both sought to find out the status of listening comprehension within LMD in the Section of English. They comprised open-ended questions, and one fixed alternative item which asked the teachers of discourse comprehension whether or not they included teaching listening in their modules. Whilst Interview One was given to teachers of discourse comprehension, Interview Two was administered to teachers of oral production.

2.6.3. The Tests

Testing is another important research instrument that was employed in this investigation. Speaking about the value of this tool, Cohen *et al*. wrote: **"In tests, researchers have at their disposals a powerful method of data collection… for gathering data of a numerical rather than verbal kind"** (2007: 414).

As far as Brown is concerned, a test can be defined as **"a method for measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain"** (2001:3). This definition has different components. First, a test is a method: an instrument which comprises a set of items, and which requires performance on the part of test-takers. Second, a test measures an individual's ability, knowledge (for example, some vocabulary items learned during a series of lessons), or performance (for instance, measuring one's performance to listen or write). Finally, a test measures a given domain: like language skills, pronunciation.

In devising a test, the researcher has to consider issues like the purpose, type, content of testing, and the elicitation techniques. The purpose that the researcher chooses determines the type of testing. In this context, different types can be identified. They include: diagnostic testing and summative testing. As far as the former is concerned, it is usually designed to discover students' strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties. In respect of the latter type of testing, it is administered at the end of a programme with the aim of measuring what has been grasped by the test-taker.

The content of the testing refers to what the test items are– their clarity, and their suitability for the purpose of the test. Finally, there are a number of techniques that can be used in a test to elicit responses from test-takers. Ur (1998) suggested the following list of commonly used techniques: questions and answers; true/false; multiple-choice; gap-filling and completion; matching; dictation; cloze; transformation; rewriting; translation; essay; monologue.

In this case study, two tests were designed to be given to the students. The first one was diagnostic. The purpose was to find out whether the subjects have difficulty in recognizing the structure of lectures. Hence, the items measured the participants' schematic knowledge with respect to the structure of lectures. For reasons of clarity, the test had two versions: one in English and another in Arabic. This test comprised two elicitation techniques: multiple-choice in addition to questions and answers. The first question sought to find whether the students know the different stages of a lecture. In order to cross validate the results, the researcher added the second question which asked the participants to explain the stages they thought are part of a lecture's structure. The third question aimed at further examining the students' knowledge of how these stages can be organized in a lecture. Finally, the fourth question investigated whether the students had some background knowledge of macro- and micro-organizers.

The second test was summative. It purported to measure the test-takers' achievement with regard to the linguistics lectures of the second semester. Therefore, the test' item measured the subjects' performance in comprehension. In this regard, two types of comprehension are assessed: global and local (see section1.7.). The elicitation technique that was used was essay. The scores of this test were supposed to be used in an attempt to find the relationship between the subjects' performance on the one hand, and their difficulties and strategies, on the other. The ultimate goal was to answer one of the researcher's questions: how does the participants' lecture comprehension performance correlate with their difficulties and strategies?

2.7. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Procedures are logistical issues related to what is actually done in the study (Mackey and Gass 2005). They entail answering the questions:

a. How exactly is the study carried out?

b. How is the treatment administered?

c. How and when is the testing done?

The different data collection procedures related to the investigation are presented in table 2.12. The students who participated were recruited in February 2011; that is, during the second semester. In the first session, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the procedures that the subjects needed to follow.

Then, the participants were given numbers for the protection of their identity. Before listening to the lectures, the subjects were given the biodata questionnaire, and the test for assessing their formal schemata. The participants were informed that they could use any of the following languages: their mother tongue; English; or French. The researcher explained each item in the two research instruments.

Steps	**Data collection procedures related to the students**		**Data collection procedures Related to the teachers**	
Step one	Explaining the purpose and procedures	*Feb. 2011*	Explaining the purpose and procedures	October 2011
Step two	Obtaining the consent from the participants	*Feb. 2011*	Obtaining the consent from the participants	October 2011
Step three	Test One and biodata questionnaire	*Feb. 2011*	interviews	October 2011
Step Four	Lectures of linguistics	*From Feb. to May 2011*		
Step Five	Difficulties and strategy use questionnaire	*End of May 2011*		
Step Six	Test two	Jun. *2011*		

Table 2.12.Data Collection Procedures

During the following sessions, the participants were to be given lectures about linguistics which revolved around language levels: phonology; phonetics; morphology; syntax; and semantics. During the lecture listening, the subjects were allowed to take notes and to ask questions.

At the end of the second semester, the researcher administered the learners' difficulties and strategy use questionnaire. This took around one hour during which the researcher clearly informed the students about what they were supposed to do using any of the following language verities: Arabic, English, or French. The researcher also explained each item and used comprehension checks, like: 'Is it clear?' 'Did you understand?' Finally, the students were tested. The subjects were allowed to stay one hour and a half.

As for the other participants, i.e., the teachers, they were informed about the purpose of the study, and then they gave the searcher an oral consent to participate in the interview. After that, they were interviewed.

So far the focus has been on a detailed account of the investigation. This latter, it should be pointed out, was first piloted. Therefore, the following section will report the pilot testing and the changes that it yielded.

2.8. THE PILOT STUDY

Pilot testing is a crucial issue in designing a study. It can be defined a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures, materials, and methods (Mackey and Gass 2005). The point of carrying out a pilot study is to uncover any problems and address them before the main investigation is carried out. For Mackey and Gass (ibid.: 43):

> **Although it might seem that careful advance planning and preparation might allow the researcher to skip pilot testing, it is in fact critical, because it can reveal subtle flaws in the design or implementation of the study that may not be readily apparent from the research plan.**

Thus, regardless of how carefully the researcher planned his study, one should never assume that his research design will work successfully. A pilot study will attempt to assess the feasibility and usefulness of the data collection instruments and procedures, as well as revise them before they are administered to the participants.

Given the importance of pilot testing, it was worthwhile conducting a small-scale study with the target population, during autumn 2011, with the purpose of assessing the feasibility of the procedures and research tools, so as to ultimately make the necessary changes. The design of pilot testing is summarised in table 2.13.

The researcher took thirty minutes of her sessions of research methodology course to give first-year LMD students lectures of linguistics. In the beginning, a test was administered to measure the students' formal schemata with regard to lectures. After that, a series of lectures of linguistics was presented. Before each lecture, a test was given to measure the students' content knowledge. In the last session, the sample was given the learners' difficulties and strategy use questionnaire, structured interviews about lecture comprehension strategies, in addition to a test which aimed at assessing their comprehension of the linguistics lectures.

The procedures	The timing
A test measuring Forma schemata	Before the course of linguistics
Tests measuring content schemata	Before each lecture
The difficulties and strategy use questionnaire Structured interviews for learners A test of lecture comprehension	After the course of linguistics
Teachers' interviews	After the course of linguistics

Table 2.13. Pilot Testing

Based on the aforementioned design of the study, a number of changes were made with respect to the procedures and the research tools, for a number of reasons. First of all, the researcher believed that the conditions under which the study took place were not similar to what usually happens in a lecture of linguistics at the Section of English, where lectures take one hour and a half. Furthermore, students are usually given a break between lectures so as to relax. However, in the pilot study, the sample was given lectures about two different modular courses with no break (because of time constraints), and lectures of linguistics were presented during the last thirty minutes of research methodology lectures which implies that learners could be exhausted and inattentive (i.e., not having a level of concentration as in the first hour of any lecture). Exhaustion and inattentiveness, it may be worth remembering, are factors which threaten the internal validity of any investigation (Mackey and Gass 2005). The data are internally invalid if they are affected by factors like boredom, fatigue. For this reason, this type of validity makes it incumbent on the researcher to make sure that the participants are giving him their **“best effort”** (ibid.: 114)

Additionally, undertaking the investigation in the way that has been mentioned, in the pilot study, added another intervening variable that may have interfered with the findings and that the researcher did not intend to include. This variable is the researcher as a lecturer. It had an impact on the findings of both the learners’ difficulties questionnaire and the last test of comprehension. In the results of the questionnaire, it was not clear if some of difficulties reported were related to the teacher of linguistics or to the researcher. In the test, it was difficult to claim that the students’ performance was correlated with the researcher’s presentation of the lectures or with the sample’s teacher. Consequently, the researcher decided to change the procedures of the pilot study, and she did not give the sample lectures of linguistics; she directly administered the different research tools.

The second change was made at the level of research instrumentation. In the learners' difficulties' and strategies' questionnaire, some open-ended items were added to check whether students used the strategies appropriately. The tests measuring content knowledge were omitted, as it was not possible to meet the sample every time they had a lecture of linguistics. For a related reason− time constraints− it was not possible to conduct the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher realised that the students' learning experience in listening comprehension may be an influencing factor. In an attempt to control this variable, the biodata questionnaire was added.

Finally, the researcher planned to interview teachers to investigate the difference between LMD and the previous four-year curriculum BA. Nevertheless, this was not feasible since none of the participants in the sample instructed speaking and reading in both educational systems. Therefore, the interview was confined to teachers' pedagogical instructions within LMD only, with the purpose of investigating the status of listening in general and lecture comprehension in particular.

2.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter has so far revolved around describing the case study in terms of where it took place, the participants, the research instruments and procedures. As far as the first point is concerned, the researcher undertook the study in the Section of English at Abou Bekr Belkaid

University. The official programme of this section did not recognise listening comprehension as a modular course, but it included it within the module of discourse comprehension. Among the issues that the analysis of the lessons and materials of discourse comprehension revealed were: neither listening comprehension was instructed systematically, nor was lecture comprehension taught.

In respect of the subjects, the sample comprised some First-year LMD students in addition to some of their teachers. The researcher set out to investigate the students' learning experience, difficulties and strategies in understanding lectures of linguistics. The teachers were instructors of speaking and discourse comprehension, whose participation in the study was meant to provide more information about the status of listening comprehension in LMD, at the Section of English.

As for the research instruments, the researcher employed different data collection measures. While two questionnaires and two tests were administered to the students, two semi-structured interviews were administered to the teachers.

Finally, the end of this chapter is a detailed account of the procedures of the research methods. The first procedure was to explain the study and its purposes to the participants. Then, the researcher took an oral consent from them. After that, the research instruments were given to the participants. The aforementioned research tools and procedures underwent a pilot testing. This latter was the main concern of the last section in this chapter. For more information concerning the data gathered during the case study, the reader can further read the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CASE STUDY: DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

3.2. DATA ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS'INTERVIEWS

- **3.2.1. Listening Comprehension and Teachers of Discourse Comprehension**
- **3.2.2. Listening Comprehension and Teachers of Oral Production**
- **3.2.3. Discussion of the Teachers' Practices**

3.3.THE BIODATA QUESTIONNAIRE

3.4. THE LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES

- **3.4.1. Results in the Learners' Difficulties and Strategy Use Questionnaire**
- **3.4.2. Results of Test 1**

3.5. THE LEARNERS' LECTURE COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

3.6. RESULTS IN TEST 2

3.7.DATA DISCUSSION OF LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES, STRATEGIES, AND COMPREHENSION

3.8. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

3.10. CONCLUSION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Once the research data had been collected, with the help of different types of data collection instruments, the following step was to analyse those results. Data analysis refers to the sifting, organising, and synthesising of data so as to arrive at the conclusions of the research (Selinger and Shohamy 1989). The bulk of this chapter will be concerned with both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Quantitative analysis is based on analyzing a set of data in numerical form, or in the form of linguistic units converted into numbers. The types of data are numerous (for instance, tests' scores; learners' ranks on course grades; the number of learners who have certain characteristics), but they are similar in that they are quantifiable; that is, each datum is a number that represents some well defined quantity, rank, or category (Brown 1988). This type of data analysis is conducted with the help of statistics.

In the current case study, the researcher employed the following statistical procedures: *central tendency*, *standard deviation, correlation coefficient, effect size,* in addition to *measures of frequency* and *percentages*. As far as the first one is concerned, there are three main measures of description: mean, mode, median. The mean refers to the arithmetic average of a set of values. It is the sum of values in a sample divided by the number of such values. The mode is simply the value that is recorded most frequently. The median is the value that split the values of the sample into two equal groups, where half of the sample has values at and above the median while the other half has values at and below the median.

The standard deviation is a standardized measure of the dispersal of the values, i.e. how far away from the mean/average each value is. A low standard deviation indicates that all of the data points are very close to the group's mean, while high standard deviation indicates that the data are spread out over a large range of values. Therefore, the standard deviation is said to determine whether a particular group is homogeneous or heterogeneous. The lower the standard deviation, the closer the students' mean scores are to the group's mean, the more homogeneous the group is (Brown 1988).

Regarding the correlation coefficient, it enables the researcher to ascertain whether, and to what extent, there is a degree of association between two variables. In this study, spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used to highlight the degree of the relationship between the following variables: learners' different difficulties, strategies, and comprehension. However, the correlation coefficient does not necessarily imply causal relationships between the variables and, therefore, the effect size measure was calculated so as to determine the degree of the effect of particular variable(s) over the other variable(s) of the study. Finally, measures of frequency, which are sometimes converted into percentages, were used to indicate how often a particular behaviour or phenomenon occurred.

Qualitative analysis is also performed to scrutinize the quantitative results. This second type of analysis involves finding patterns and themes within the data, as well as discussions of the results by generating some possible explanations (Dornyei 2007).

In addition to the foregoing analytical procedures, the researcher engaged in data transformation, which is often used in mixed methods research. In this procedure, quantitative data are transformed into qualitative data (i.e., qualitized). This entailed transforming quantitative data to qualitative data using the technique of narrative profile formation; that is the generation of categories (also called profiles). For example, Taylor and Tashakkori (1997) generated four profiles of teachers (empowered, disenfranchised, involved, disengaged) based on the teachers' responses to a questionnaire asking about the desire to participate in decision making.

This chapter will set out to report the data gathered from the teachers' interviews. Then, it will discuss the results related to the students, namely, their difficulties, lecture comprehension strategies, and comprehension in Test 2.

3.2. RESULTS OF TEACHERS'INTERVIEWS

The bulk of this section will be devoted to data gathered from the teachers' interviews. First, data obtained from two teachers of discourse comprehension will be presented. Then, data related to three teachers of oral production will be reported.

3.2.1. Listening Comprehension and Teachers of Discourse Comprehension

Three main issues will be discussed in this section. They revolve around the objectives of discourse comprehension, the teachers' beliefs of the importance of listening within their course of discourse comprehension, and the ways through which listening is incorporated.

- ***The Objectives of Discourse Comprehension***

Teacher 1 said that she tries to help the students comprehend texts through teaching them reading strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. She uses an implicit strategy instruction. Using her words: *"concerning the strategies, I haven't taught them explicitly those strategies but I have attempted to teach how they employ them just unconsciously". For* teacher 2, the objective is to familiarize the students with Britain, including, people; their habits; how the British use their language; idiomatic expressions; culture; geographical areas.

- ***Reasons Behind Including Listening Comprehension in Discourse Comprehension***

Both teachers said that they include listening comprehension in the teaching of discourse comprehension. Teacher 1 mentioned two arguments for this: first listening and reading are both receptive skills and, second, discourse can be written and spoken. For her: *"discourse can be written and it means reading comprehension and it can be* *oral"*. Hence, teaching discourse comprehension implies teaching both reading and listening.

Teacher 2 argued that in real life people communicate using the different language skills and, thus, students should not be taught the skills separately. He said *"I'm against making separation between reading, listening, speaking because all the skills are integrated in real life conversations, that's why I from time to time in my reading session I include listening*".

- ***Listening Instruction in Discourse Comprehension***

As regards the way they included listening in their sessions of discourse comprehension, both of the participants reported using listening as a warmer of the reading texts, which implies that they usually present a listening passage in the classroom mainly to introduce the topic of the reading text, and to familiarize students with what will be read. However, teacher 1 added that she also taught listening strategies in the same way she instructed reading strategies. This means that she uses the implicit way of strategy instruction. The materials employed involve passages about Britain (the British isles, people, culture) and songs.

3.2.2. Listening Comprehension and Teachers of Oral Production

Interviews with teachers of oral production focused on the arguments for incorporating listening in this modular course, as well as how listening is approached.

- ***Reasons Behind Including Listening Comprehension in Oral Production***

All the teachers participating stated that they seek to provide a native speaker model so as to be imitated by their EFL students. Teacher 5 said "*learners need a model to imitate*". Teacher 3 said that he believes that a language should be taught by a native speaker, and if this is not possible then listening should be included. He argued that *"there are some characteristics of the English language that we don't have in Arabic nor in French, for example the alveolar /t/ and /d/ I mean that all students pronounce /t/ and /d/ as dental as in Arabic or French… so if we don't have a model we don't know this distinction."* Similarly, teacher 4 expressed the same point of view saying that as teachers *"we are not considered as native speakers of English, I think it's very important, to learn, or to listen at least to native speakers".*

- ***Listening Instruction in Oral Production***

Classroom practices and objectives differed from one teacher to another. Teacher 3 pointed out that he mainly seeks to introduce language functions, like requests; introducing people. Using CDs he relies on repetition and practice till students are able to produce those language functions.

Teacher 4 mentioned that she focuses on a number of objectives, which are: to be able to listen appropriately to native speakers to understand spoken English; to be able to speak English fluently; to be able to write through listening to English; to pay attention to pronunciation; to learn new vocabulary. She stated that she uses laboratory and conversations. The main activities that she designs are listening and writing, as well as creating conversations based on listening models.

Teacher 5 said that the main objective is to establish an "*authentic environment*" where students can practise English and imitate native speakers. She employs conversations and stories in her classroom sessions of listening. As regards the instructional activities, she mentioned the use of filling the gaps; and asking students to give the orthographic versions of English spoken words.

So far this section has reported the results as recorded by the different teachers of oral production and discourse comprehension. The following section will try to draw a number of pedagogical explanations and interpretations, based on some theoretical research in this field. The focus will be on the underlying principles of the teachers' practices in listening.

3.2.3. Discussion of the Teachers' Practices

Three main conclusions may be drawn from teachers' interviews:

- ❖ Listening is used only as a means to develop reading comprehension and speaking;
- ❖ Listening instruction may not be systematic;
- ❖ Limited types of listening materials are used.

These three conclusions reinforce White's view concerning the status of listening which has:

> **historically been the most neglected and misrepresented in the second language (L2) classroom… all too often it seems to be viewed as a means of exposing students to a new language or of practising language which has already been introduced** (2006:111).

Both teachers of discourse comprehension reported that they include listening as a type of pre-reading activity in the beginning of their reading comprehension sessions. Concerning teachers of oral production, they stated that they include listening to provide their students with a native speaker model that has to be imitated, and to introduce as well as practise new language items, like vocabulary and language functions. In other words, listening is mainly used as a means in the teaching of reading comprehension, and the speaking skill. In this context, it should be mentioned that although listening may provide a rich source of language input and may be a useful vehicle for preparing students for reading and speaking in the new language, this way of approaching the teaching of listening comprehension does not respond to some of students' needs at university, in addition to the fact that it appears to be unaffected by some recent developments regarding the way researchers conceptualise teaching and learning, and how they view the relation between the classroom and the world beyond it (White 2006).

First of all, university students face a challenging task of listening to lectures and, consequently, one of their needs is to be instructed into lecture comprehension. Secondly, there has recently been a widely spread belief that learners need to assume responsibility for their own learning, by becoming active participants rather than passive receivers. This can be achieved through explicitly teaching them the necessary strategies which enable them to become independent (Mendelsohn 2006). Thirdly, there is now a realisation that learners need to develop intercultural competence and that English has become a lingua franca− it is no longer used only by the British and the Americans− and, hence, EFL learners should listen to different accents through which they can gain insights into different cultures, including their own culture.

Further evidence that listening is misrepresented in the classroom comes from Teacher 5, who said that she relies only on using two activities: recognizing orthographic versions of spoken words and gap filling. The underlying purpose appears to be development of the skills of word recognition and inferencing. Therefore, other listening skills (like the ability to detect causes and effects from events) and lecture comprehension are neglected.

Analysis of the interviews also revealed that four teachers (80%) do not systematically attempt at developing listening comprehension, as they did not point out to the systematic instruction of listening in terms of strategies or skills, nor did they even mention that they try to help learners cope with the listening process through teaching them how to listen. For instance, teacher 5 does not assist learners with how to complete the activity of filling the gaps. Rather, a traditional product-based approach seems to be adopted, in which emphasis is merely on the product− getting right answer.

White (2006) described how such a teaching methodology (i.e., the product approach) takes place in the classroom as follows: students usually listen to a tape to find the correct answers, and if they fail to do so after the first listening the instructor will typically play the tape another time in the hope that a second listening will help students get the correct answer. If the students fail again, then the teacher supplies the correct answer and moves on. Consequently, a conventional listening lesson simply adds another text to the students' experience and it does little or nothing:

> **to improve the effectiveness of their listening or to address their shortcomings as listeners… Hence, the likelihood that, confronted with a similar text another time, learners will use the same, unsuccessful techniques. They will not have improved as listeners**. (Field 1998: 111)

It is clear, then, that listening may not be effectively instructed since teachers do not examine what their students are getting wrong and why they are doing so, in order to opt for appropriate diagnosis. Furthermore, Vandergrift (2011) argued that an exclusive emphasis on the right answer often creates high level of anxiety, for an interest in the correct answer is often associated with evaluation. White explained this view saying that **"Because the methodology for teaching listening still focuses on the products of listening, students often experience the listening class as a kind of "test", which creates anxiety and tension"** (2006: 118).

The argument that the product approach tends to test rather than teach listening comprehension also comes from Mendelsohn (2006) who wrote that what is traditionally misnamed as teaching listening comprehension should in fact be called testing listening. Teaching, by definition, requires instructing somebody to do something, be it driving a car or listening. Ironically, traditional listening classes took the other form: having the learner listen and answer questions without teaching him how to go about it, that is; testing listening without first teaching him how to listen. This runs counter to what should happen in language instruction where teaching usually comes before testing. In this context, Field wrote: **"it is an educational axiom that an instructor should not test a skill or a body of knowledge unless it has been first taught"** (2008: 80)**.**

Regarding the teacher who claimed to be teaching listening strategies within discourse comprehension, she reported using an implicit strategy instruction– also called blind training, or uninformed training. In this approach, learners are given exercises requiring the use of particular strategies. These latter are, nevertheless, not labelled nor is their value discussed. This type of training is often criticized as it does not result in strategy maintenance and transfer, for several reasons:

- Learners are told what to do and led to do it without being informed as to why they should act in a particular way;
- Learners are not told that a strategy will help;
- Learners are not informed when it is appropriate to use particular strategies; that is, students are not aware that strategies belong to certain situations or goals.

Blind instruction does not help learners understand the significance of the strategies and, consequently, students do not continue using them, and they cannot identify similar satiations in which the strategies can be used. Additionally, this type of instruction does not develop learners' metacognition, i.e., awareness of the listening process. A related criticism of uninformed strategy instruction is that students who are not aware of the strategies do not develop independent learning and have little opportunity to become autonomous learners (O'Malley and Chamot 1990).

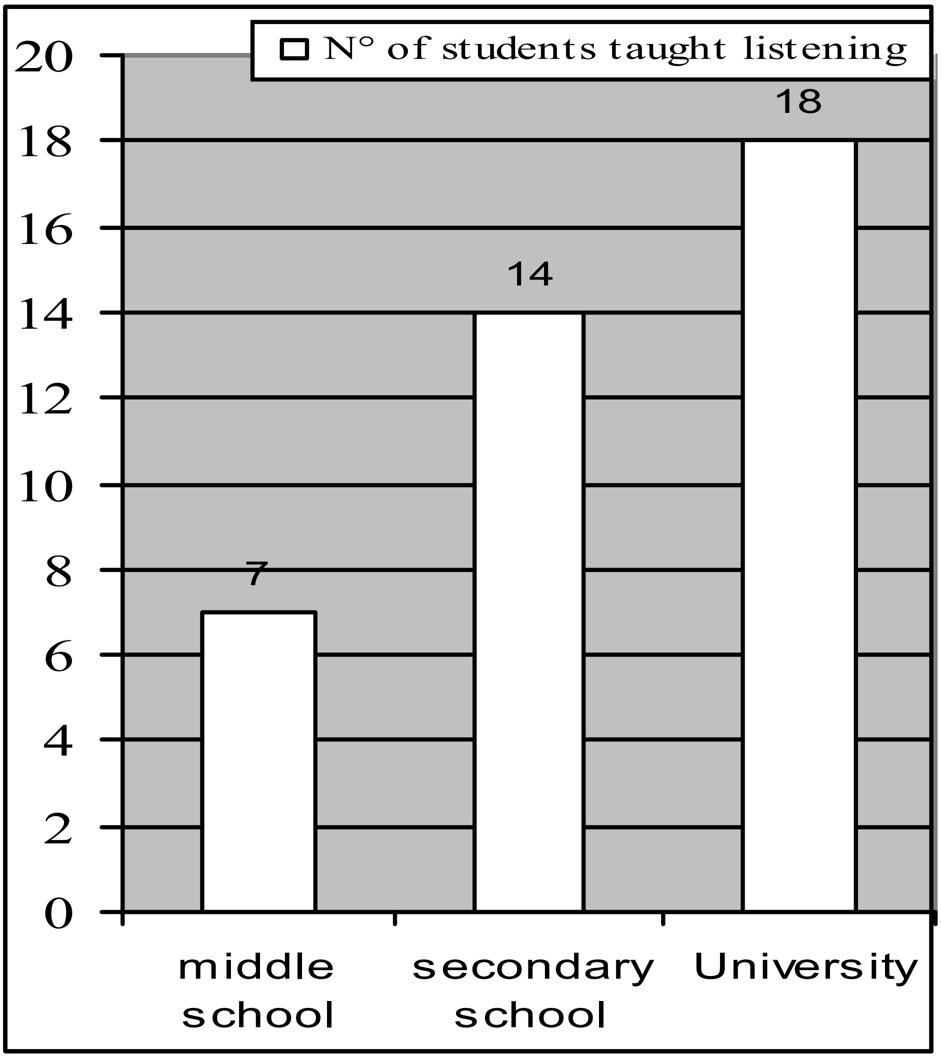
Finally, one teacher argued for the importance of integrating listening with other skills. However, this way of instruction may reinforce the view that listening can be developed through providing learners with some occasions to use the skill. Consequently, no extended attention will be given to any of the skills, including listening, which made Field to point out that **"Focusing on a single skill for (say) 15 or 20 minutes gives the learner little more than a taster"** (2008: 74). This runs counter to one of the principles of teaching listening comprehension, which is the fact that teachers should spend time to systematically develop the listening skill (ibid.).

As far as the listening materials are concerned, teachers reported the use of conversations and stories. This means that only three examples of the following two genres are included: face to face and listening for pleasure (section 1.8.1 reviews types of listening genres in the EFL classroom). This runs counter to the view that which stresses that any effective course of listening should include a wide range of materials that are based on different types of monologues and dialogues (Nunan 2002).

So far the previous sections have focused on presenting and discussing data from the teachers' interviews. The following sections will review data analysis and discussion of the students' experience, difficulties, and strategies in lecture comprehension.

3.3. RESULTS OF THE BIODATA QUESTIONNAIRE

This section will present the students' factual and attitudinal information that were investigated through the biodata questionnaire. For the first type of knowledge, it partly concerned the students' experience in listening comprehension in the different levels of education. It is summarised in the following Graph.



<u>Graph 3.1.</u> The Students' Experience in Listening Comprehension

As it can be concluded from the graph 66.67% were not taught listening comprehension in the middle school. In the secondary school and university, the percentages of students who claimed they were not taught this skill were 33.33% and 14.29%, respectively. Regarding lecture comprehension, all the participants noted down that they were not taught how to listen to lectures. Finally, the biodata questionnaire also revealed other factual information which is the fact that for all the students (100%) linguistics was a new module.

Attitudinal knowledge, on the other hand, consisted in investigating the beliefs that the students held concerning their abilities to understand linguistics lectures and the reasons behind such beliefs. First, when asked to rate their abilities, the students chose different points in the scale. Their answers are presented in the following table.

Levels of comprehension	**Frequencies**
100%	1
80%	1
50%	5
30%	8
10%	3
4%	3

Table 3.1. Students' Self-assessment of Lecture Comprehension

Then, the students were asked to justify their choices. Six students said that linguistics is difficult because it is like philosophy. Two students complained about the teacher's method saying that he did not provide more explanations to understand better. Two other students believed that linguistics requires readings and they did not have enough time for that. Six learners justified their moderate abilities to comprehend the lectures by stating that this module is new for them and, hence, it deals with many new concepts that they had never encountered and difficult to understand. Two students chose 50% in the scale praised the teacher's method but added that linguistics remains difficult and revolves around new and difficult words. Only one student wrote that he understood linguistics very well because of his interests in this module.

The following section will further report the learners' characteristics with respect to the problems they encountered when trying to understand their lectures of linguistics.

3.4. RESULTS OF THE LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES

Learners' difficulties were investigated using a questionnaire, more precisely the first part of the learners' strategy use and difficulties questionnaire, in addition to test 1. While the first research instrument sought study different barriers, namely the lecturer's fast speech rate, lack of content schemata, and lack of formal schemata; the second research tool focused mainly on one comprehension problem− lack of formal schemata.

3.4.1.The Learners' Difficulties and Strategy Use Questionnaire

A summary of the frequencies of the different difficulties is displayed in table 3.2.

Frequencies / Difficulties	never	rarely	some-times	often	Always
Lecturer's fast speech	6	4	11	00	00
Lack of formal schemata	1	10	6	3	1
Lack of content schemata	2	4	9	3	3

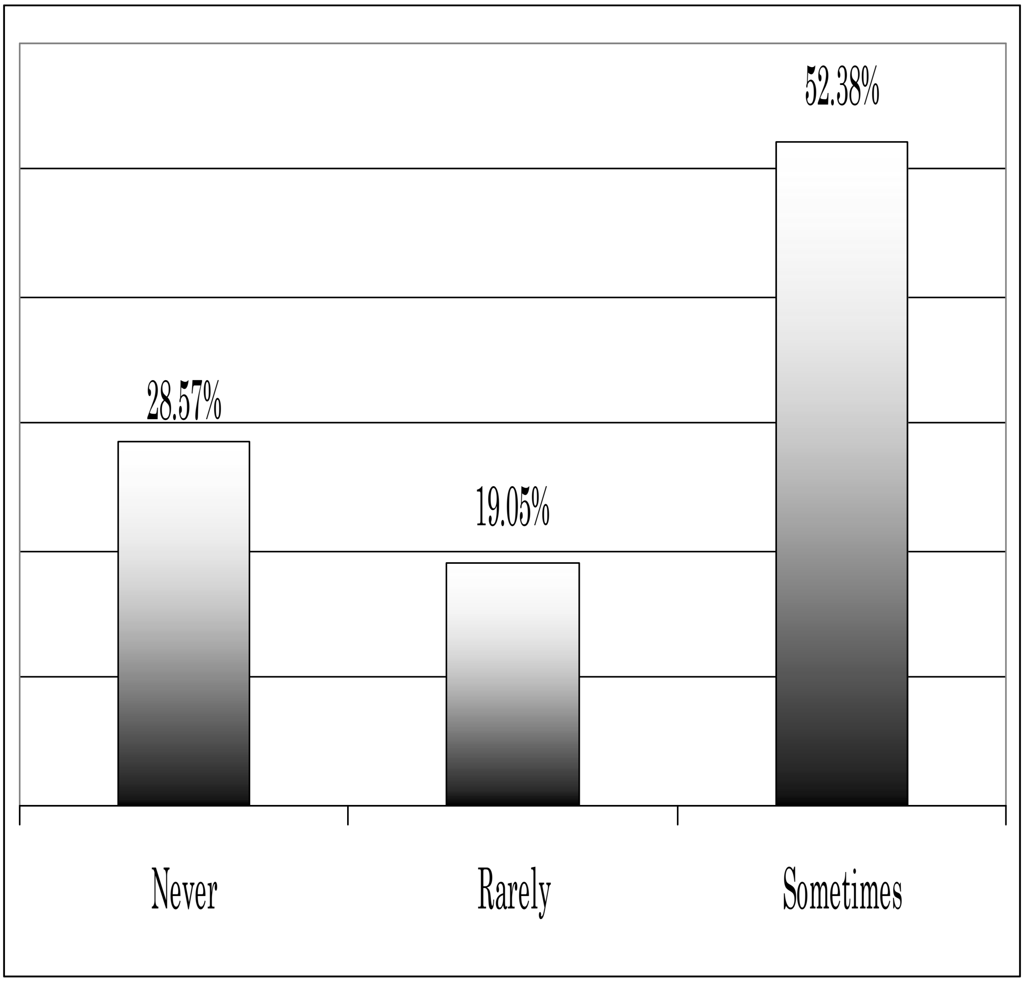
Table 3.2. Frequencies of the Students' Difficulties

As regards the lecturer's fast speech rate, the majority of students reported having this problem, choosing the point of 'sometimes' in the rating scale. None of the participants selected 'often' or 'always'. For the second difficulty– lack of formal schemata, ten students noted that they rarely encountered this problem. Meanwhile, the same number of students was reported to face this problem as frequently as *sometimes, often, always*. Finally, the majority of the subjects said that they *sometimes* had difficulty pertaining to lack of content schemata, while six participants selected *often* and *always*, and only four chose *rarely*.

The remaining of this section will provide an account of the data gathered in detail, using other statistical measures like, percentages, central tendency, and standard deviation. The results will also be displayed through different charts.

❖ *Difficulty One: the Lecturer's Fast Speech Rate*

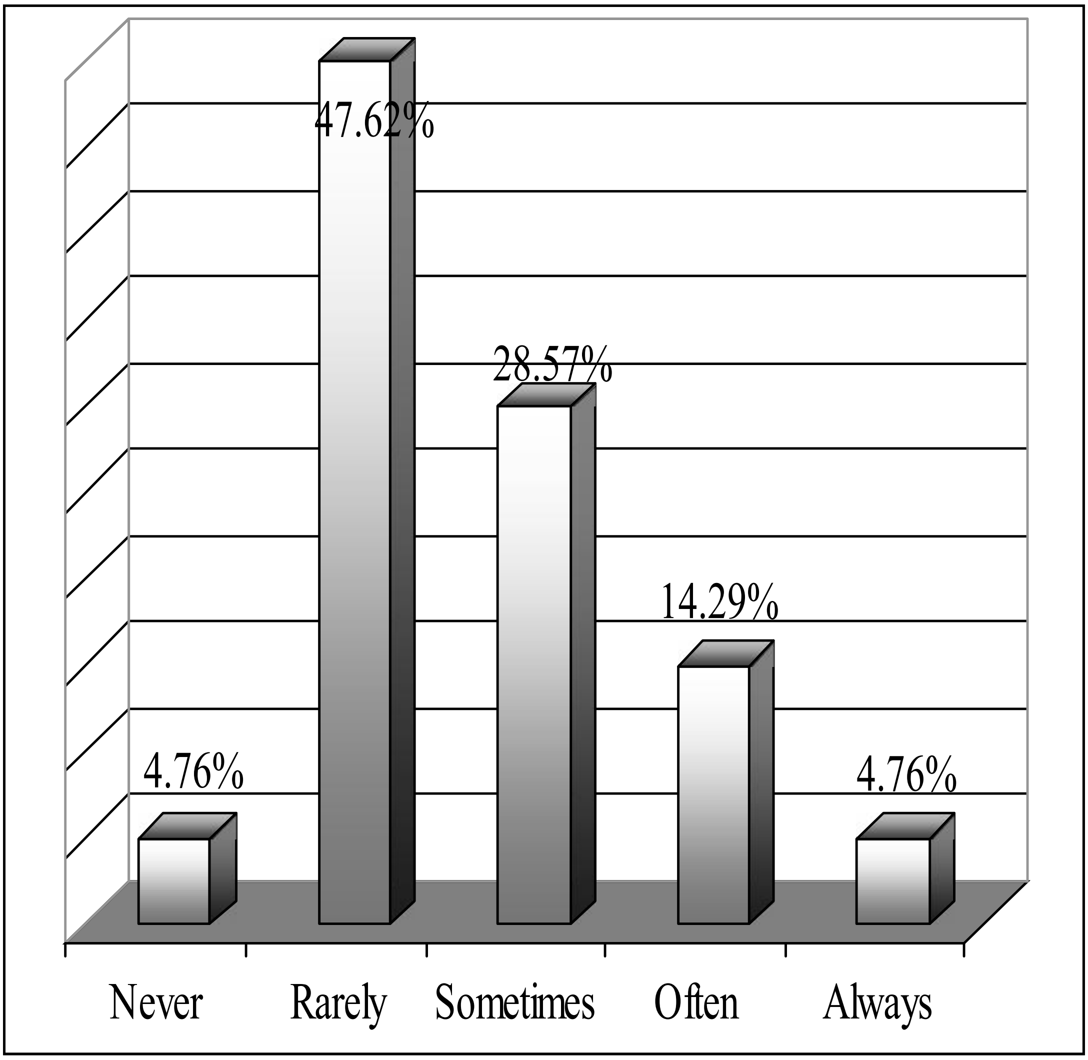
For the first degree of frequency *never*, 28.57% of the students did not view that the teacher's speech was an obstacle to lecture comprehension. The percentage of learners who rarely perceived this variable as a problem was 19.05%. The majority (52.38%) said that they sometimes perceived teacher's fast speech as a problem that hindered comprehension. Finally, the points indicating the degrees of frequency *often* and *always* were not chosen by any student.



<u>Graph 3.2.</u> The Students' Difficulties: Lecturer's Fast Speech

❖ *Difficulty Two: Lack of Formal Schemata*

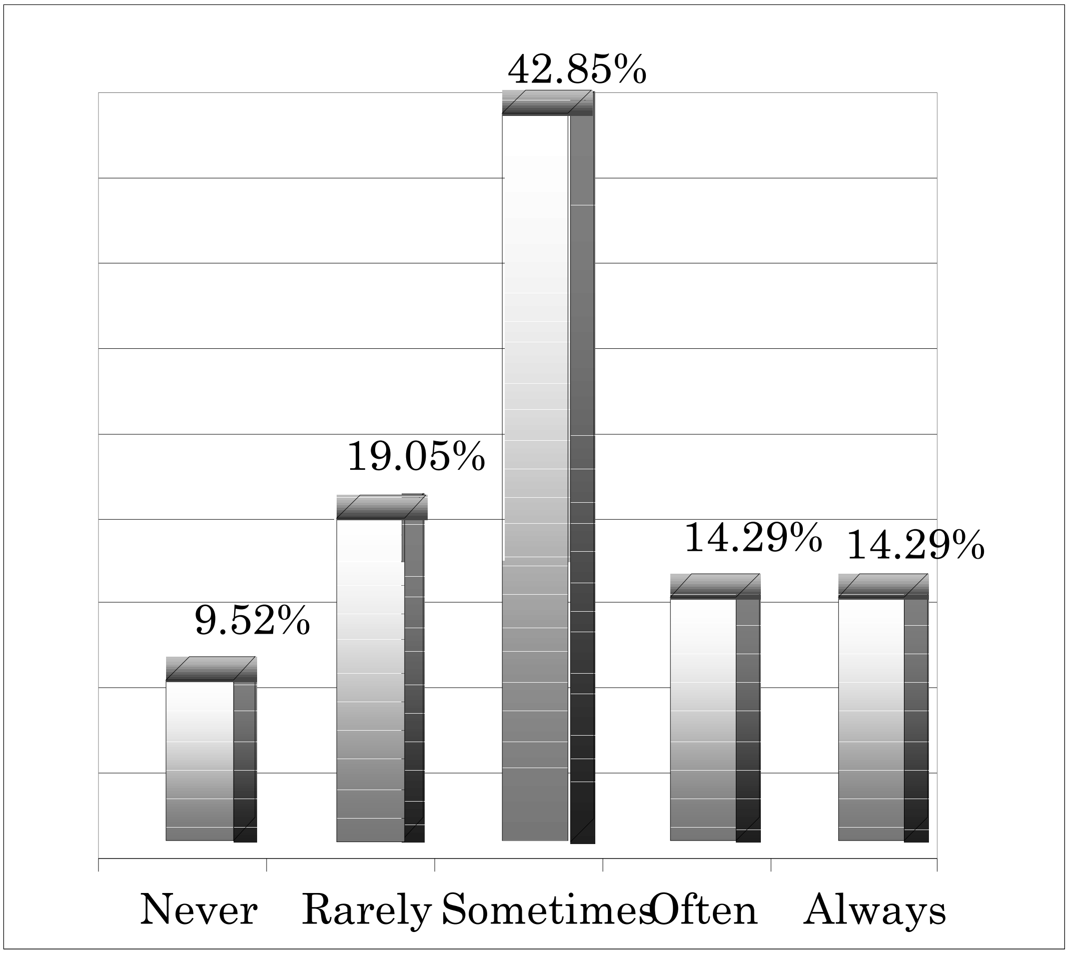
The percentage of students who wrote that they did not face difficulty comprehending lectures because of lack of schemata regarding the structure of lectures was 4.76%. The percentage of learners who chose the point *rarely* in the scale was 47.62%. Finally, another 47.62% reported having this problem– they chose either *sometimes* (28.57%) or *often* (14.29%) or *always* (4.76%).



<u>Graph 3.3.</u> The Students' Difficulties: Formal Schemata

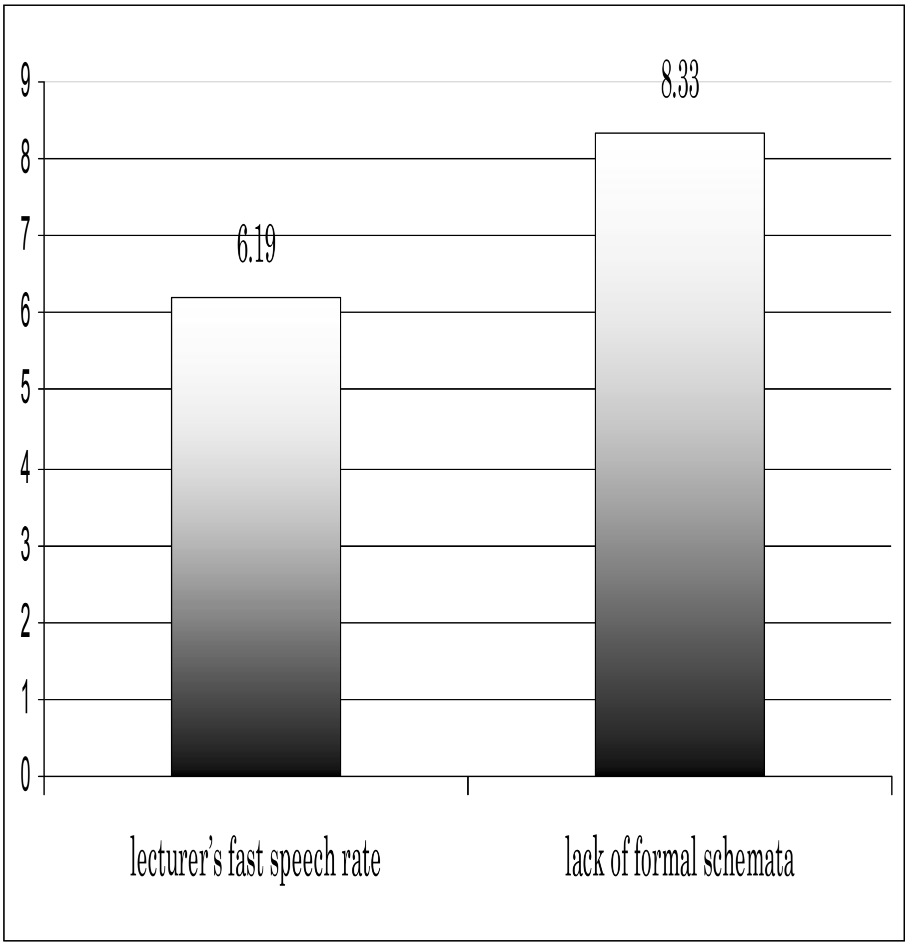
❖ *Difficulty Three: Lack of Content Schemata*

When asked whether lack of background knowledge related to linguistics was a barrier to comprehension, 9.52% chose the point *never* in the rating scale. For 19.05%, this was rarely a problem. As regards the remaining (71.43%), their answers ranged from *sometimes* (42.85%), *often* (14.29%), to *always* (14.29%). These findings are displayed in graph 3.4. What can be inferred from the results of this item is that students who did not have some prior information of the topic were not assisted by their teacher to build background knowledge to help them cope with this obstacle.



Graph3.4. The Students' Difficulties: Lack of Content Schemata

The reader may notice that lack of content schemata is at the top of the difficulties that learners reported facing. Fifteen out of twenty-one students made judgements about the frequency of this item by marking one of the following degrees: *sometimes*, *often*, or *always*. However, it is not clear what is the second major difficulty through the calculated frequencies and percentages. Hence, the researcher conducted statistical calculations of the mean scores related to each difficulty.



<u>Graph3.5.</u> Mean Values of the Participants' Difficulties

From the above graph it has become clear that the second problem that was viewed to hinder comprehension was lack of formal schemata. This latter will be discussed more in section 3.4.2.

The last item in this part of the questionnaire sought to find out whether the students faced other barriers in comprehending their lectures of linguistics. Some participants reported problems related to linguistics itself, as being a difficult subject matter containing many words and quotations that they did not understand. They went further to view linguistics as philosophy that they could not comprehend. Other learners complained about the lecturer's pronunciation as being not well understood, and about the teacher's method in explaining the lectures. More precisely, student 18 wrote *'May be the method of teaching; I mean the steps that the teacher must follow during the explanation of the lecture'.* One student mentioned tiredness in addition to his classmates' disturbance. Finally, some students wrote that they did not have other difficulties, while others did not state any further problem.

3.4.2. Test 1

The main purpose of test 1 was to measure the students' formal schemata. Concerning the first question of the test, a score of 0.5 was given to each stage. That is, if the student chose all the stages, he would have the score of 2. For the second question, the researcher assigned score of 1.25 for each correct explanation. Hence, the total points are: 5. Finally, each correct answer in questions three and four was assigned 6.5. After correcting this test, the researcher calculated the central tendency and standard deviation, each of them is displayed in the following table.

Mean	Mode	Median	SD
5.88	9.75	5.75	2.83

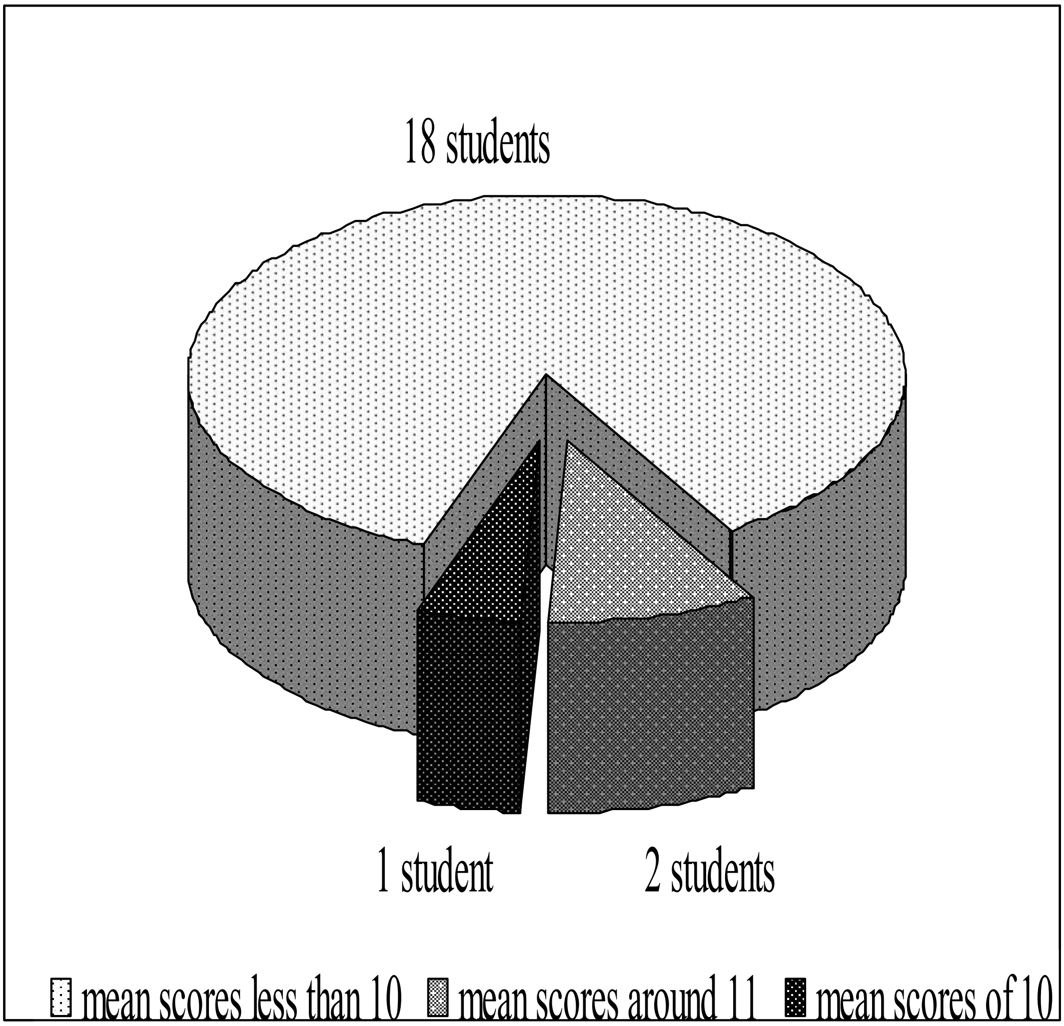
Table 3.3. Test 1: The Central Tendency and SD

The high standard deviation indicates that the sample was heterogeneous, with the lowest score being 0.25 and the highest one being 9.75. The mean, mode, and median were low. These results confirmed those of the learners' difficulties and strategy use questionnaire where the students also reported having difficulty which pertained to this comprehension barrier.

In addition the students' difficulties in lecture comprehension, this case study also tried to highlight the strategies that those learners appear to have been using to understand their linguistics lectures. This will be the main concern of section 3.5. where data obtained from second part of the learners' difficulties and strategy use questionnaire will be examined.

3.5. RESULTS OF THE LEARNERS' STRATEGIES

This section sets out to present the results in terms of central tendency. As regards the mean of the group, it was low (6.78) which implies that the mean value related to each student's strategy use was not high. In this context, the overwhelming majority (85.71%) did not reach a mean of 10, and their mean scores of strategy use ranged from 1 to 8. The percentage of students who reported mean scores of strategy use around 11 was 9.52%. Finally, 4.77% had a mean of 10 (see pie chart 3.1).



Pie Chart 3.1. Students' Mean Values of Strategy Use

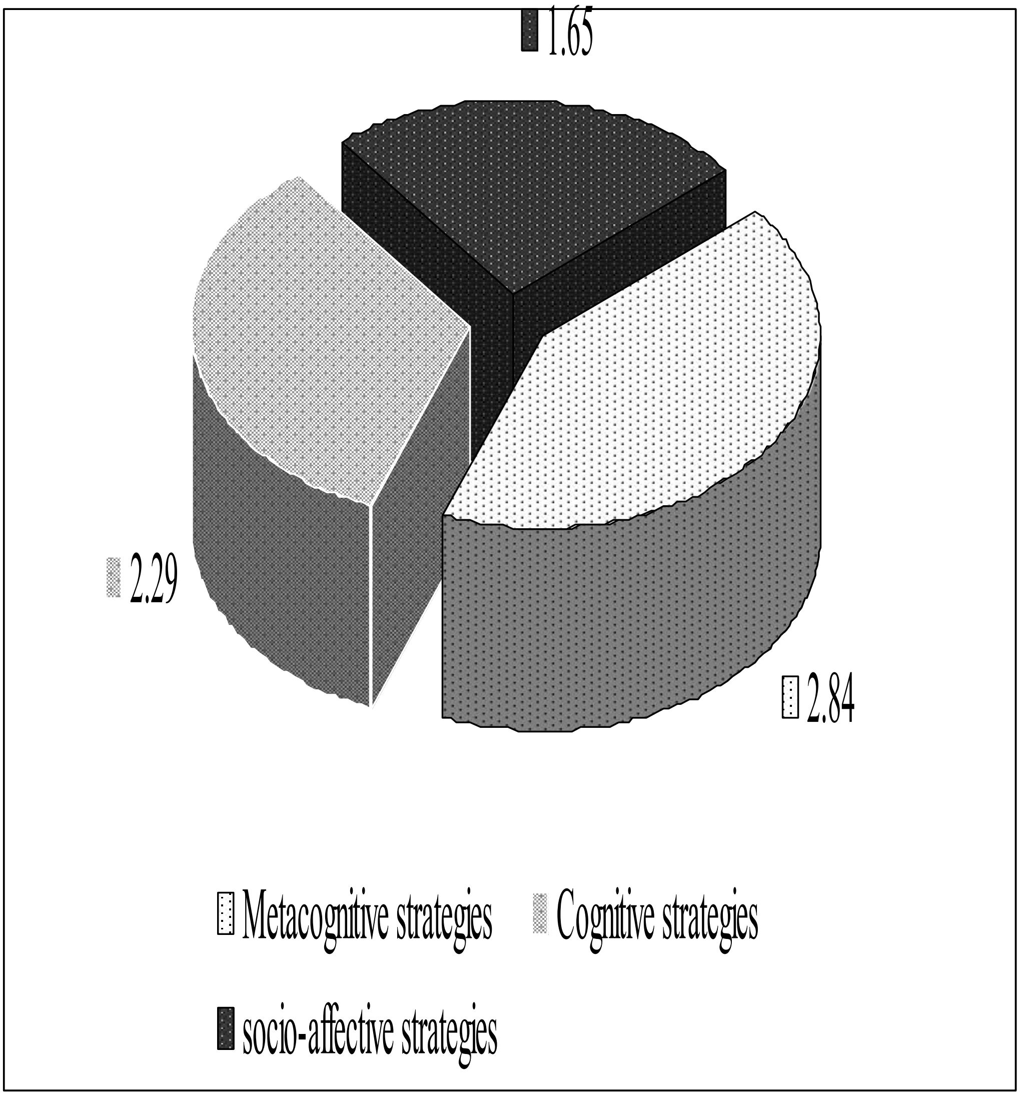
Other elements of the central tendency of the group are reported in table 3.4.

Mode	Median	SD
4.67	6.67	2.53

Table 3.4. The Group's Mode, Median, and SD of Strategy Use

The results show that the most frequently occurring mean value was low. The same remark can be made regarding the median. The standard deviation, which was not very high, suggests that the sample was heterogeneous containing extreme values: as it was previously mentioned the highest mean value among the students was 11 and the lowest one was 1.

The mean scores of the different types of lecture comprehension strategies, namely metacognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; and socio-affective strategies were 2.84; 2.29; 1.65, respectively, as it is displayed in pie chart 3.2. Hence, the students appeared to use less the strategies that require interaction with their peers and the lecturer. When the researcher further examined the highest mean values of the three types of strategies in relation to the participants, she came with the same finding with just only one student as an exception. For instance, the student 23, who reported the highest mean score of strategy use (11.67), was found to use the socio-affective strategies less than the other two types of strategies (the metacognitive and cognitive ones).



<u>Pie Chart 3.2.</u> Students' Mean Values in the Different Types of Strategies

This finding is compatible with Jeon' results (2007) in an investigation of lecture comprehension strategies. The reason that this researcher stated was the students' concern of losing face. In order to overcome this problem it was found that of some those students resorted to asking questions after class. A similar finding was reported by Abdelgadir Youcef (2006) with her sample of Saudi Arabian participants, who stated that they felt embarrassed to ask the lecturer questions.

The last item in the questionnaire asked the participants whether they have other strategies. One student added that he revised his lessons every day, and another said that he focused more on key words to understand them better. This second student believed that understanding key words is a key to comprehension of lectures.

3.6. RESULTS OF TEST 2

Test 2 sought to measure the students' comprehension of the linguistics lectures that were given in the second semester. A remark which may be worth adding about this test is that the researcher could not understand some sentences as students did not use the appropriate words. For example, student 2 wrote: *"...the first* [phonetics] *depends on the production of sounds and speech organs...."*. Table 3.5. shows the central tendency and the standard deviation of the group.

Mean	Mode	Median	SD
5	4.25	4.5	2.35

Table 3.5. Test 2: The Central Tendency

As it can be seen from the table, the group had a very poor performance. The mean and mode were very low. The most frequently occurring score was 4.25. The sample demonstrated heterogeneity with a high standard deviation. In this context, the best mark was 10 and the lowest was 1. These results may reveal that the overwhelming majority of students could not comprehend their lectures.

3.7. DATA DISCUSSION OF LEARNERS'DIFFICULTIES, STRATEGIES, AND COMPREHENSION

In an attempt to understand the association between the different variables of the present case study, the researcher computed the spearman rank order correlation coefficient, using Microsoft excel in addition to an online calculator (for the purpose of corroborating the results). The mathematical formula for calculating this coefficient is:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

When the two variables fluctuate in the same direction. i.e,. as one increases so does the other or as one decreases so does the other, a positive relationship is said to exist. Correlations reflecting this pattern are prefaced with a plus sign to indicate the positive nature of the relationship. Thus, +1.0 would indicate perfect positive correlation between two variables. A negative relationship, on the other hand, is to be found when an increase in one variable is accompanied by a decrease in the other variable. Negative correlations are prefaced with a minus sign. Thus, −1.0 would represent perfect negative correlation (Cohen *et al*. 2007). After computing this coefficient, the researcher had to check whether the association was significant or not, by comparing the calculated coefficient value with the values of spearman rank table of significance.

As far as this study is concerned, the researcher first calculated the correlation between the participants' lecture comprehension strategies and test 2. The coefficient was +0.46. In this case study, the sample size was twenty-one students, and according to the spearman rank table, in order to achieve significance the coefficient has to be at least 0.37. The obtained coefficient was higher than 0.37 and, thus, the correlation between students' lecture comprehension strategies and their performance in test 2 was significant: the more strategies the better test performance will be. This also means that one can reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between the variables.

Concerning the correlation between the sample's difficulties and their performance on test 2, the coefficient was -0.57. Based on the table, this value is significant and, hence, one can reject the hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between the participants' difficulties and test 2. The coefficient -0.57 also indicates a negative correlation between the two variables: the more there are difficulties the lower the scores will be on test 2.

Finally, the correlation between the students' strategies and difficulties was -0.57. This implies a significant negative association between the two variables: the more strategies the students possess, the less difficulties they encounter and, consequently, the null hypothesis was also rejected.

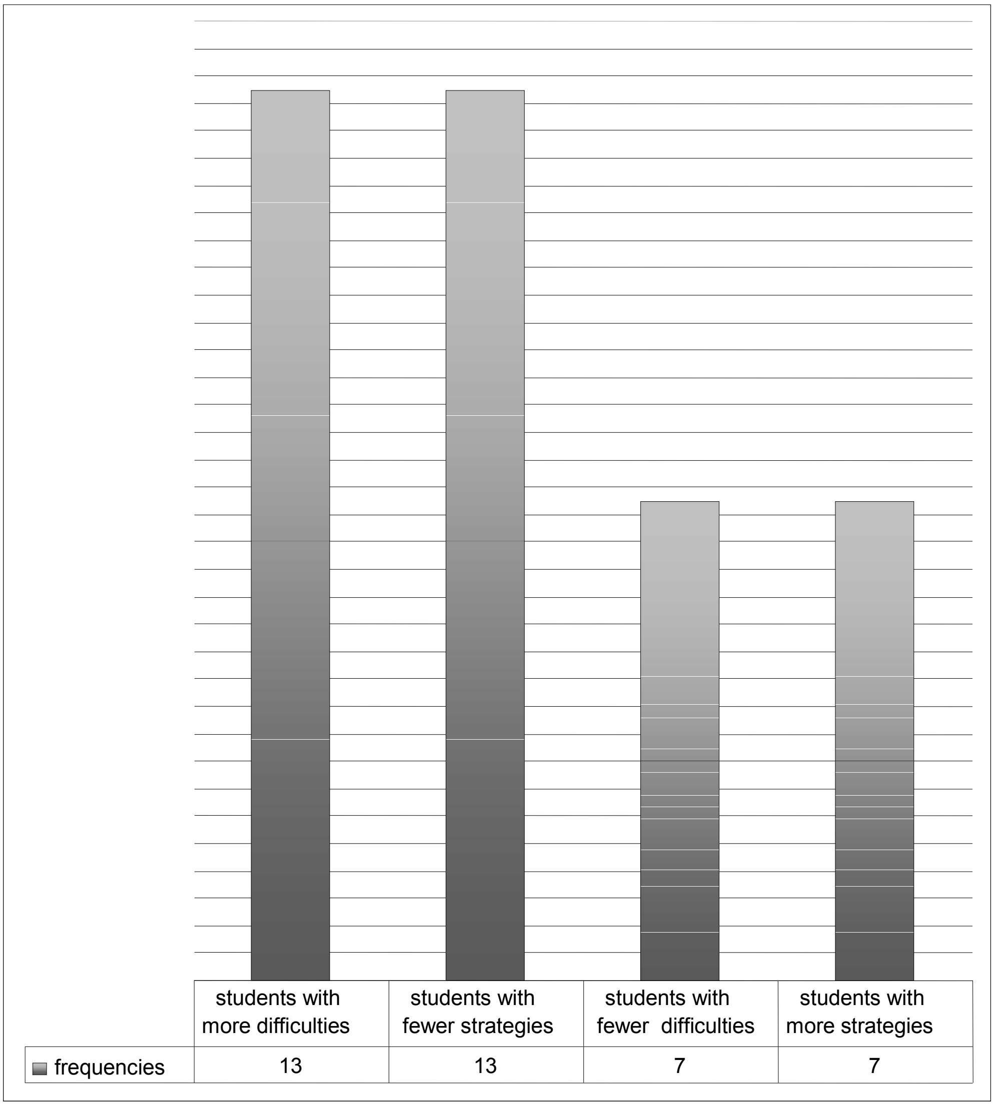
Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that a significant correlation between two variables does not necessarily imply a relationship of cause-effect, **"All we can say is that they are *interrelated*, since the higher one variable gets, the higher the other is likely to be"** (Dornyei 2007: 225). Therefore, the researcher attempted to determine the effect size of the correlation. For the students' strategies and difficulties in relation to the test, it was found 0.53 which means that 53% of the variance in the results could be attributed to the relation between these variables, instead of chance or other variables.

As regards the students' lecture comprehension strategies and difficulties, the effect size was 0.32, which means that 32% of the variance in the data could be explained by the relationship between these two variables, rather than by chance or by some other variable(s). These findings related to the effect size of the correlation between the different variables pushed the researcher to further examine the data obtained, to look for regularities accounting for relationships between the variables, and exceptions probably explaining the presence of other intervening variables. Based on previous research some interpretations are suggested. This will be the main concern of the rest of this section.

- ***Learners' strategies and difficulties:***

In order to set a clear comparison between students, quantitative data of the questionnaire were converted into qualitative data (qualitization) using the technique of narrative profile formation. Students were divided into four categories: learners with more difficulties, learners with few difficulties, learners with few strategies, learners with more strategies. Based on this data transformation the researcher noticed that thirteen students (61.90%) who reported facing more difficulties (i.e., had high mean values in comprehension difficulties) were found to use fewer strategies (i.e., they scored low means in lecture comprehension strategies). For example, student 24 scored 13.33 and 1 in difficulties and strategy use respectively.

Meanwhile, seven students (33.33%) who were categorised as facing fewer difficulties were found to use more lecture comprehension strategies. For instance, student 5 scored 5 and 11 in difficulties and strategy use respectively. These findings may further support the previously stated results regarding the existence of a negative correlation between comprehension difficulties and lecture comprehension strategies. In other words, while students' repertoire of strategies decreased their problems in comprehending lectures increased. This relationship between the learners' strategies and difficulties is portrayed in the following graph.



<u>Graph 3.6.</u> Learners' Difficulties and Strategies

The reason why the participants had some lecture comprehension strategies may partly be explained in relation with the data obtained from the biodata questionnaire, where it was found that different participants were taught listening comprehension at different levels (middle and/or secondary schools, and/or university). However, the students' low mean scores in strategy use may suggest that these students could not successfully transfer what they learnt to the new task of lecture listening. In this context, Cohen (1998) argued that no single strategy will be appropriate for all tasks, and hence, individual learners should apply the various strategies according to the nature of the task at hand.

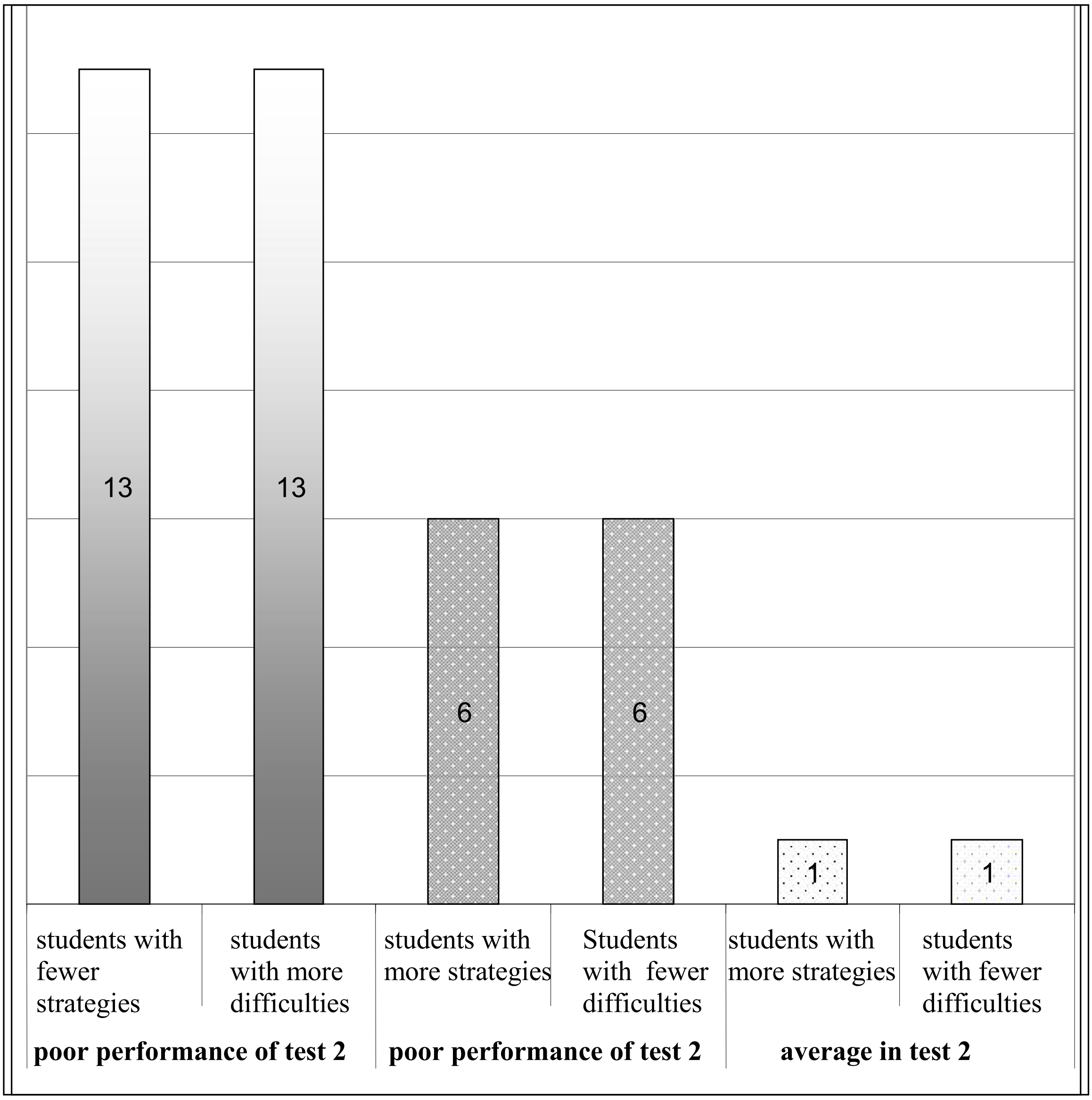
The learners' possession of some strategies could also be explained partly by the common view in the literature that learners usually have some language learning strategies. They often employ them in their mother tongue, and transfer some of them to foreign language leaning (Mendelsohn 1994). This study assumes that the strategies that had been found might already be used by the participants in L1 listening comprehension. Strategies like, paying attention to details; concentrating; asking for clarification may usually be used by L1 users in their everyday listening comprehension. However, the results of the statistical measures also indicate that the subjects did not have a sound repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies. This may be due to the fact that L1 listening comprehension strategies might have been imperfectly transferred to L2 learning (Rost 2005).

Students' low mean scores can further be explained by, first, the biodata questionnaire where all the participants noted that they have never been taught lecture comprehension strategies and, second, data from teachers' interviews which revealed that teachers used a product-based approach and only one teacher employed blind strategy training. Both types of instruction do not lead to strategy maintenance or transfer.

Except student 1 who had similar mean scores (nearly 11) in both comprehension difficulties and strategy use, probably because he did not use the strategies effectively to overcome his problems.

- ***Learners' difficulties, strategies, and comprehension:***

Data were again qualitized using the mixed method technique of narrative formation. The following graph attempts to summarise the relationship between students' difficulties, strategies, and comprehension in test 2. The reader may notice that only one student is not included in the graph (student 1).



Graph 3.7. Learners' Difficulties, Strategies, and Comprehension

A more detailed examination of the students' comprehension scores in relation to findings of the students' difficulties and strategies revealed that thirteen students (61.90%) had a poor performance of test 2 and at the same time were categorised as: possessing less strategies (i.e., having a poor repertoire of strategies) and facing more difficulties (i.e., scoring high mean values of difficulties). For instance, student 24 got the mark of 3.25, scored a mean of 1 in strategy use, and demonstrated comprehension difficulties with a mean of 13.33. These results may imply that the students comprising the sample did not possess the necessary lecture comprehension strategies which could help them overcome their difficulties and get good scores in the test. This may also reinforce the correlation results stated in the beginning of this section.

Nevertheless, six students (28.57%) had a poor performance of test 2 but reported having more strategies and less difficulties. For example, student 29 scored 3.25 in test 2, but claimed to have more strategies (his mean score was 10) less comprehension problems (with a mean of 1.67). A closer examination of these students' strategies showed that they had problems using comprehension monitoring; problem identification; and advance organization, or two of such strategies. Therefore, although they may have used other strategies they usually or often did not verify their comprehension (whether their understanding of the lectures was correct or not), or identify which problems in the linguistics lectures hindered their comprehension and need resolution, or plan which appropriate strategies to use.

In this context, Vandergrift (2007) argued that skilled listeners use about twice as many metacognitive strategies as their less skilled counterparts. Cohen (1998) also stated that the amount of strategies is as important as the skilful orchestration of these strategies: learners need to monitor and evaluate their learning, as well as generate appropriate strategies. This is known as metacognition. Chamot further added that:

> **the good language learners are skilled at matching the strategies to the tasks… whereas less successful learners apparently do not have the metacognitive knowledge about task requirements needed to select appropriate strategies** (2005:116).

Another reason which may be suggested is that these students did not possess the necessary strategies which could help them sit on the achievement test in this study (i.e., test 2). This type of strategies is referred to as test-taking strategies (Brown 2002). A complete review of these strategies is reported in section 4.2.3. This could also be the reason why student 1, who had similar sores in strategies and difficulties, had also a poor performance of the comprehension test.

Finally, student 23 had the average in test 2 (10.25) claimed to have more comprehension strategies (his mean value was 11) less comprehension problems (with a mean score of 5). One possible explanation is that he may have used the strategies more appropriately than other participants, and he had some test-taking strategies.

Another remark regarding student 23 was that he pointed out in the biodata questionnaire (in the last item) that he was interested in linguistics which is why he could understand it. Hence, this leads the researcher to suggest the importance of motivation, which has been found to have a profound impact on language learning in general, and the frequency of strategy use in particular.

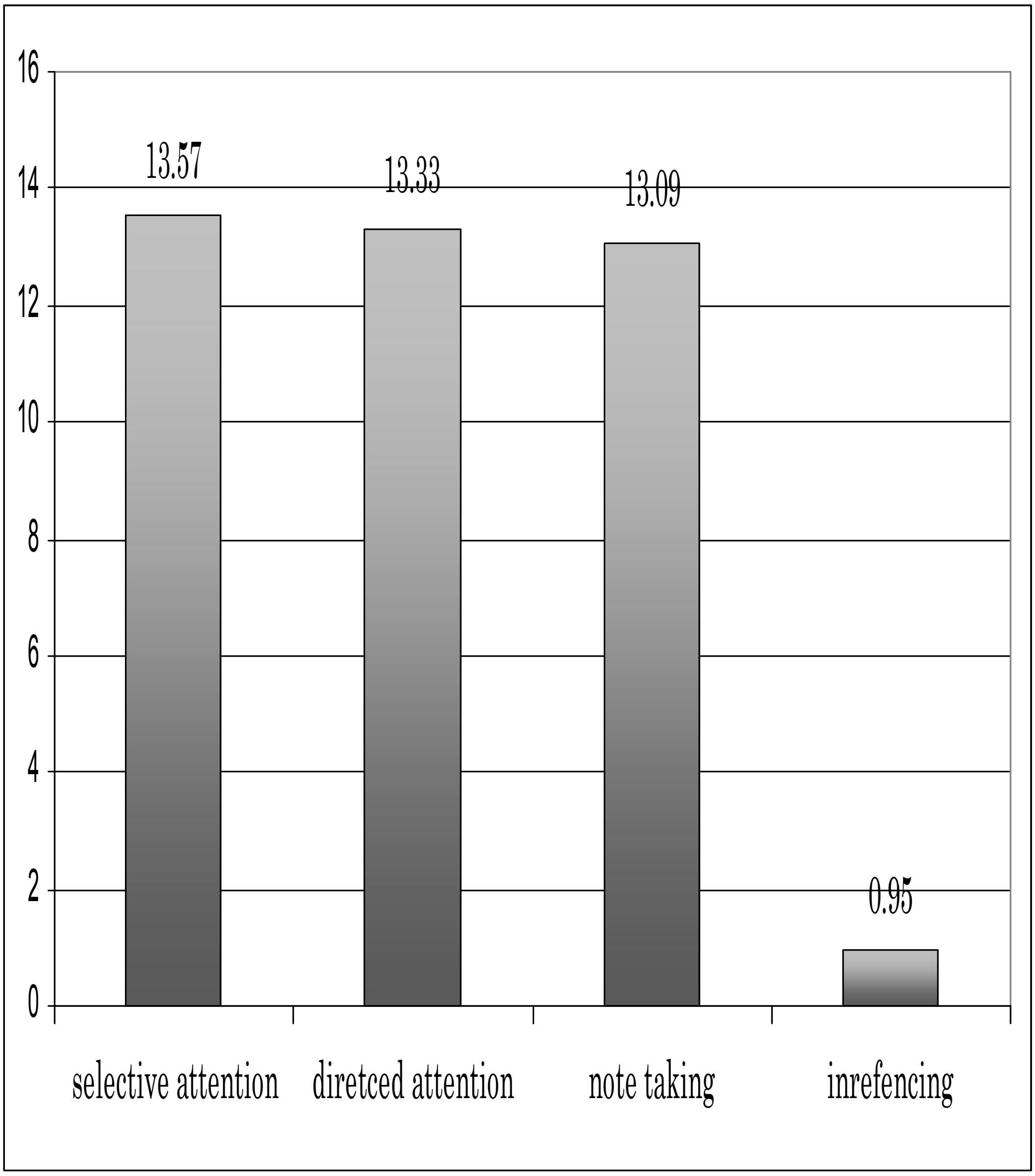
Theoretical support of this argument comes from Rost (2006) who considered affective involvement, which entails controlling anxiety and motivation, as being important in listening strategies use. He further added that the effects of both high affective involvement and low affective involvement are now well recognized in the literature of listening. He stated that the first type of involvement: **"promotes enhanced understanding through better connection with the speaker and through construction of more tangible references for remembering the discourse"** while the second type **"typically results in less connection, less understanding, and minimal efforts to evaluate and repair any misunderstandings that arise"** (ibid.: 61) and, hence, one may conclude that higher affective involvement influences the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies.

Further more, there is a number of case studies which have documented the relation between motivation and strategies. Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) reported in their study that motivational strength, which includes drive, determination, and willingness to exert effort, was associated with the use of language learning strategies of university students. Similarly, Yang and Kim's study (2005), which partly investigated the correlation between strategy use and motivation in lecture comprehension, confirmed the same conclusion as they found that students with higher motivation intensity reported higher frequency in strategy use. Joan'study (2007) also highlighted that interest in the topic affected the students during and after the lecture. On the one hand, some participants noted that lack of interest may result in losing concentration during the lecture and, on the other hand, other subjects reported that interests in lectures increased retention of the subject-matter content after the lecture.

- ***The highest and the lowest means scores in strategies:***

The strategy that was reported less by the group was inferencing, which enables learners' to guess the meaning of unknown language items from the context. The highest strategy mean values were related to the strategies of directed attention, selective attention, and note-taking. Graph 3.8. reports the results related to these strategies.

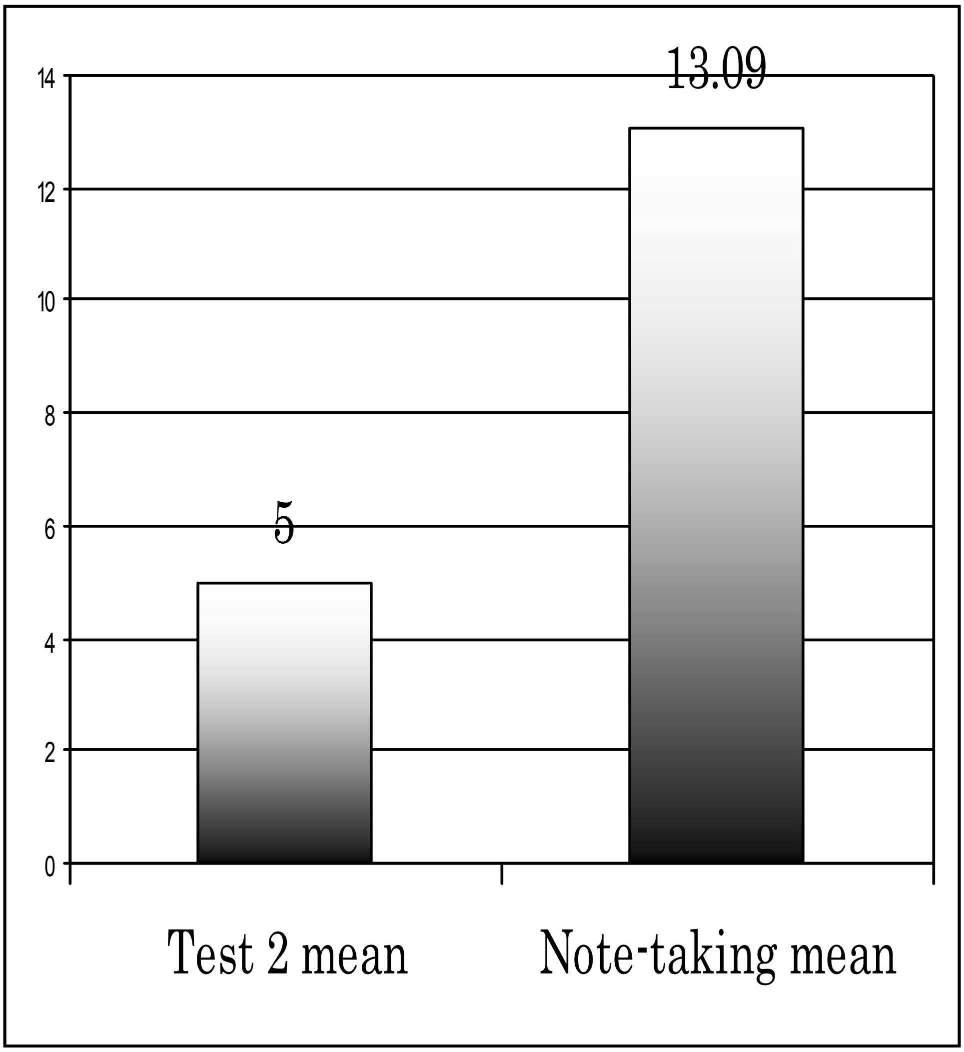
The low mean value of inferencing may possibly be due to lack of background knowledge. If listeners have no knowledge relevant to the particular event taking place, then it will be more difficult for them to make inferences (Buck 2001, Rost 1994). In this study, the mean of this type of knowledge was low, and it was reported to be the highest difficulty that the students encountered. Hence, the participants seemed to have poor background knowledge which could not assist them to make inferences.



<u>Graph 3.8.</u> The Highest and Lowest Mean Scores of Lecture Comprehension Strategies

A possible explanation for the quantitative high mean values of the other strategies is that note-taking requires, partly, concentration and selective attention of important details (Piolat *et al*. 2005).

Another remark which may be worth mentioning is related to the strategy of note-taking. This latter was among the strategies with a high mean score (13.09). Sixteen students said they use this strategy either sometimes, or often, or always. But the mean of test 2 reveal low comprehension performance (as it is shown in graph 3.9.): only one student among them– student 23, got the average in test 2. This finding runs counter to some other studies about the positive effect of note-taking on lecture comprehension. For instance, Kiliçkaya and Çokal-Karadas (2009) found that their participants performed better on retention of the lectures when they were allowed to take notes.



<u>Graph 3.9.</u> Means Scores of Note-taking and Test 2

Concerning this case study, the researcher suggests two possible reasons for the participants' poor performance despite the high frequency of using note-taking. First, the subjects were poor note-takers. In support of this view, Chaudron *et al.*'s study (1994) concluded that if notes are to be of value then they should be accurate and unambiguous. Additionally, Armbruster (2000) argued that when students are left to their own devices they do not take very good notes. This researcher cited a number of studies in which the participants missed to record from 60% to 70% of the lectures' main ideas. Similarly, Jeon (2007) reviewed some research related to the facilitative effect of not-taking, and stated that learners are able to take advantages of this strategy when certain effective note-taking techniques are present, such as appropriate use of abbreviations.

A second possible reason that led to a negative correlation between the students' poor performance in Test 2 and note-taking was that that the participants did not effectively review their notes. This is known as a test-taking strategy.

- ***Learners' comprehension:***

A final remark regarding Test 2 is that the researcher noticed that some students succeeded, to some extent, in defining the linguistic levels, but they did not understand the relations between key concepts within each level, and between the different levels. This students' comprehension failure may be due to a number of factors. First, some participants' proficiency could help them recall information as presented in the lectures, however their lack of content knowledge hindered them from integrating the information from the different parts of the lectures. In this line of thought, Jeon’s study (2007) confirmed that learner’s proficiency may help the student achieve only a superficial understanding of the lectures which is sufficient for retention tasks but not for tasks of reconstructing information to infer relationships. This second type of tasks requires the use of content knowledge.

The second factor may be the fact that the lecturer could not successfully present the lectures, which led to learners’ inability to grasp the whole picture and infer relations between the lectures’ topics. In the biodata questionnaire and the learners’ difficulties and strategy use questionnaire, some participants, like student 8, complained either about the teacher’s way of teaching saying that he gave only main points without more explanations, or about their inability to comprehend the relationships between the lectures’ ideas. Hence, one may suggest the following conclusions:

1. Lack of detailed explanations: in this context, Barnes and Lock (2010) found that their EFL learners believe that the type of lecture delivery is one of the most important factors in effective lecturers. These latter should deliver lecture using clear explanations and good examples. In a similar vein, some of Jeon’ subjects in his sample (2007) also reported lack of detailed explanations of the lectures’ content as a factor which affect the comprehensibility of the topics.

2. Lack or absence of repetition during the lecture: Blough (2000) cited a number of studies which emphasize the importance of repetition by lecturers, arguing that in such studies students recorded more notes (main ideas and supporting details) as they were exposed to repetition. Meanwhile, the results of the study that Cervantes and Gainer (1992) conducted partly indicated that repetition facilitates comprehension.

3. Lack or absence of pauses during the lecture: based on a number of studies, that Armbruster reviewed (2000), pausing for brief periods of time during the lecture enable students to take more and better notes, as well as engage more in processing the lecture content.

4. Lack or absence of visuals during the lecture: in the study of Flowerdew and Miller (1992), which partly concerned learners' perceptions of lecturers' effective strategies, the subjects mentioned the use of various types of visual supports as being beneficial. Similarly, in Jeon' study (2007), a number of subjects reported that their lecture comprehension was influenced by the visuals employed, like Power-Point slides and handouts. More precisely, these visuals helped them make relations between the information of the lecture; pay more attention; compensate for their lack of vocabulary.

5. Lack or absence of the necessary lexical phrases during the lecture: concerning this suggestion, it was also one of the findings of Miller's study (2009, as cited in Weinberg *et al.*

2011) which explored features of lectures that facilitate comprehension. Amongst the features, the students participating identified organization of lectures. Under the title of teaching skills, Jeon (2007) also wrote that some of the subjects believed that the lecturers' inability to present the materials in a well-organized way can result in confusion when trying to grasp the whole picture or make relationships between ideas of the lecture. Additionally, Crawford Camiciottoli (2007) reported a number of case studies which revolved around highlighting the importance of macro-organizers. He pointed out that such studies proved that the presence of these lexical phrases is beneficial as it results in improving retention and recall of lectures; helping learners activate content schemata; helping listeners successfully follow the lecture.

A third factor, which may explain the students' inability to understand relations between the lectures, is that some of the subjects of this study were not aware of the lexical phrases organizing lecture's structure, even if the lecturer used them. This can be evident from the results of the learners' difficulties and strategy use questionnaire in which lack of formal schematic knowledge was also perceived as a problem that hindered comprehension. Among the studies that lend support to this view was that of Smit (2006). The researcher first designed a pre-test to a sample comprising two groups: control and experimental. In the pre-test there was no significant difference in the performance of the groups: both scored low mean values in lecture comprehension. After that, there was an intervention programme designed to the experimental group, which consisted in awareness-raising activities concerning lexical phrases. Eventually, in the post-test, this researcher observed significant difference between the two groups' performance, with the experimental group out-performing the control group.

Finally, the subjects' poor comprehension performance in this case study may also be attributed to the fact they perceived the lecturer's fast speech as being an obstacle to understanding their lectures, as they mentioned in the learner's difficulties and strategy use questionnaire. If the lectures were presented with a fast speech rate, then participants were not probably able to attend to a great deal of information.

3.8. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the different difficulties that first-year LMD students faced when trying to understand their lectures of linguistics, as well as their repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies. This section will report the main results with reference to the secondary research questions. In the light of the results, the hypothesis of each research question will be either confirmed or rejected.

1. Research question one: what is the status of listening comprehension within LMD? The hypothesis of this question is: *the skill of listening comprehension might officially be included in the curriculum of LMD, but may not be systematically developed in practice.*

Analysis of the teachers' interviews revealed three important points: first, listening was used as a means to other ends rather than an end in itself, second, teachers did not use an appropriate methodology for teaching listening– either a product approach or an implicit strategy instruction and, third, listening materials were confined to two types: face to face listening and listening for pleasure. This is in contrast to recent views in the literature on teaching listening which indicate greater interests in raising listeners' awareness of the process (Vandergrift 2004), and which also stress the use of different listening text-types (Nunan 2002). This situation, in the English language section, may confirm Bouhadiba's view (2000, as cited in Hamzaoui 2006) that the Algerian teacher seems to be lacking qualified ELT professionalism. Therefore, one may accept the hypothesis related to this research question.

2. *Research question two*: *What is our EFL learners' experience in listening comprehension in general, and lecture comprehension in particular*? The hypothesis is: *throughout their learning experience, our EFL learners may have been exposed to listening, but they may not have been taught how to manage to understand university lectures.*

For this research question, a biodata questionnaire was used. The findings indicated that some students were taught listening comprehension in the middle schools, secondary schools, and at university. However, the subjects were not instructed into lecture comprehension and, hence, they reported that it was difficult for them to understand their linguistics lectures. This may also lend support to Bouhadiba's opinion (ibid.) of the Algerian teacher. Teachers do not seem to respond to students' needs to comprehend lectures, though this educational genre is widely used at university. As a result, one may confirm the hypothesis of this second question.

3. *Research question three: What might the students' difficulties be in understanding their lectures of linguistics*? The hypothesis is: *Among the difficulties that our EFL learners may have are those related to the speed of delivery of lectures, lack of formal and content knowledge.*

Findings for this question were collected using a questionnaire and a test. Such findings confirmed the hypothesis as they revealed that the students faced barriers pertaining to: lack of content schemata; lack of formal schemata; lecturer's fast rate of speech. Another difficulty that was mentioned is teacher's method. In this context, the researcher proposed different interpretations. Firstly, the lecture was not delivered appropriately through organizing it into different stages using the necessary lexical phrases, which made it difficult for learners to comprehend such lectures. Additionally, there was lack or absence of some facilitative strategies which may be useful to learners, as repetition; pauses; and visual aids. Secondly, the students themselves were not aware of the structure of lectures and the different lexical phrases even if the lecturer used the phrases, which made the processing of the lectures difficult.

4. *Research question four: Do the students have the necessary strategies which assist them in comprehending their lectures of* *linguistics*? The hypothesis is: *our EFL learners may not have a sound repertoire of strategies to comprehend their lectures of linguistics.*

A questionnaire was used to uncover the students' lecture comprehension strategies. The results clearly showed that the learners did not have a sound repertoire of this type of strategies, which clearly lends support to the hypothesis. Furthermore, a negative correlation was found between the participants' lecture comprehension strategies and difficulties: as they did not possess the necessary strategies, their difficulties to understand their lectures increased.

5. *Research question five*: *Do the students successfully attain comprehension of linguistics lectures*? The hypothesis is: *our EFL learners may display poor understanding of their lectures of linguistics.*

The students' scores in test 2 were very low, which suggests that the participants could not understand their lectures of linguistics, and which, thus, further reinforces the hypothesis. The researcher also suggested the following conclusion: since these subjects faced difficulties which they could not overcome– for they did not have the necessary strategies– their performance revealed poor comprehension of the linguistics lectures.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any case study, this investigation has some limitations since there were some problems that the researcher encountered. Although limitations may be inevitable, the researcher should try to deal with them when designing the study, through setting some delimitations. One of the limitations is that non-random sampling was used in selecting the students, mainly because of time constraints related to the students' hectic schedule and the timetable of the researcher, which could not allow her to use a random sampling technique and meet a large number of students, at different occasions so as to administer the different research instruments. Consequently, the researcher had to choose another type of sample: convenience sampling, which does not ensure representativeness and, thus, generalisability. In order to overcome this limitation, Mackey and Gass (2005) suggested that the researcher should thoroughly describe the sample so that others can judge to whom and in what circumstances the results may be meaningful and generalized. For the present case study, the biodata questionnaire was used to provide enough details about the students.

Time limitation was also the main reason why the questionnaire was the only research tool used to uncover the students' lecture comprehension strategies. As the researcher faced difficulties to have access to the students, she could not use the interview as a type of verbal report that might have yielded rich qualitative information about how strategies were employed by the students. In an attempt to compensate for this lack of qualitative information, the researcher chose to:

a. add some open ended items;

b. provide further interpretations of the results through reporting some studies about lecture comprehension in other contexts. However, it is worth mentioning at this level that one should be cautious to confirm that such interpretations are entirely applicable to the present case study. A second way to provide explanations for the quantitative findings was the use of the biodata questionnaire which aimed at highlighting the students' learning experience.

Finally, the researcher sought to set a comparison between LMD and the previous system with respect to the status of listening comprehension in general, and lecture comprehension in particular. Therefore, she designed interviews for teachers who instructed speaking and reading in both educational systems. However, she could not find a sample of teachers for this purpose, which pushed her to make a comparison with reference to the programmes of both modular courses within the two educational systems.

Finally, it is hoped that acknowledgment of the above limitations will contribute to improvement of future research in this field.

3.10. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this chapter has been to analyze and discuss the data which were obtained from the different research instruments. These latter involved interviews for teachers, in addition to tests and questionnaires for students. The researcher engaged in the analysis via some quantitative statistical measures (like: frequencies, percentages, mean), and qualitative interpretations.

The main finding of teachers' interviews showed that listening comprehension was not systematically practised at the Section of English. The research tools administered to students yielded various results. First, based on what was reported concerning their learning experience, learners were not instructed into how to listen to lectures. Secondly, they faced many difficulties in understanding their lectures, namely lack of content schemata, lack of formal schemata, lecturer's fast rate of speech, in addition to teacher' s way of giving lectures. This latter, as it was interpreted, may imply that the lecturer did not engage in effective strategies of delivering lectures, like repetition; pausing; visual supports; motivating learners; presenting the lecture in a well-organized way.

At the same time, learners did not have a sound repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies to help them overcome such barriers. They seemed to be lacking some metacognitive strategies, in addition to their inappropriate use of the range of the strategies they already possess. As corollary to these findings, the participants could not successfully comprehend their lectures of linguistics. Finally, the chapter also suggested that motivation seems to play an important role, for students who were more strategic noted that they were also motivated.

After diagnosing this lecture listening situation, the following step is to provide some suggestions as to how teachers and lecturers may effectively address their students' needs to cope with the task of lecture comprehension. This will be the main concern of chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR
PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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4. 1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the findings of the case study, this chapter will provide some pedagogical applications for teachers and lecturers, at the Section of English. As far as teachers are concerned, the main suggestions will address the way they can assist EFL university students to develop lecture comprehension. For lecturers, a number of issues will be raised with respect to how they may effectively deliver their lectures. Finally, further proposals will concern recognising listening comprehension as a modular course as well as assisting teachers and lecturers in applying the chapters' proposals.

4.2. TEACHING LECTURE COMPREHENSION

This section will propose including the teaching of EFL listening comprehension as a modular course within LMD. The objective of the module is to develop students' listening skills in general, and lecture comprehension in particular. As the present research is concerned with lecture listening, the bulk of the section will be devoted to ways of assisting students in listening to and comprehending their lectures.

4.2.1. Developing Learners' Metacognition in Lecture Comprehension

During the last few decades, there has been a shift in the focus of language instruction towards the needs of individual learners. Language teachers have begun to attempt to meet the students' various linguistic and communicative needs. Inherent in this shift of focus is also a shift in the responsibilities of both teachers and learners. No longer does the individual teacher control every aspect of the learning process. Rather, learners are supposed to share responsibility for successful language learning, i.e., they need to be autonomous. In describing this shift of focus, Cohen wrote that learners themselves now, more than ever, are

> **sharing the responsibility..., and in doing so, are becoming less dependent on the language teacher for meeting their own individual learning needs. By giving the students more responsibility… language programs are inviting the learners to become more autonomous.** (1998: 66)

Given this change, students should not be left to their own devices, as Cohen's argument goes on, but they should be taught how to assume responsibility through developing their metacognition. This latter is simply defined as thinking about thinking (Anderson 2008). It assists learners to:

- self-diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in learning, and become more aware of what helps them to learn;

- make decisions about how to approach a task and develop a broad range of problem-solving strategies;

- monitor and self-evaluate their performance;

- transfer successful strategies to new learning contexts.

Without metacognitive approaches, learners are essentially **“without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their progress, or review their accomplishments and future learning directions.”** (O’Malley and Chamot 1990:8).

The importance of metacognition has also been raised within the field of listening comprehension, in particular. In this context, Vandergrift (2011) maintained that EFL learners need to be able to take charge of their listening process to become skilled listeners. The success with which they can do this depends on their awareness of that process, that is, their metacognition about listening. This ability enables them to reflect and evaluate so as to ultimately make changes in the way they approach the task of listening comprehension.

Given this role of metacognition for learning in general, and EFL listening in particular, learners need to have regular opportunities to develop their metacognitive awareness through strategy training. The present section will propose three different options to assisting students to become metacognitive listeners: explicit strategy instruction, awareness training, and Chamot *et al.*’s framework (1999). These instructional models can be used in various combinations to complement each other, and to add variety to strategy training (Cohen 1998).

The goal of explicit strategy training is to explicitly teach learners why, how, and when strategies can be used to facilitate comprehension. It is, therefore, designed to raise students’ awareness as to the purpose and the rational of strategy use, to give learners opportunities to practise the strategies they are being taught, and to help them learn the strategies in new contexts. Although various models of explicit strategy instruction have been proposed, Graham (1997) noted that there is one common thread which runs through most of them, and which can be summarized as follows:

1. Preparation and assessment: this stage concerns identifying the students' strategies;

2. Presentation/modelling: the instructor describes and demonstrates the use of the strategy in question;

3. Practice: learners are given various opportunities to practise the strategy;

4. Evaluation: learners are encouraged to assess the efficacy of the strategy.

The following suggestions revolve around ideas concerning how teachers may assist learners in practising some lecture comprehension strategies. The strategies highlighted are: note-taking, elaboration, inferencing, summarization, peer cooperation, asking for clarification. Some of the activities are adopted from some textbooks which instruct university students into lecture comprehension.

- *Elaboration*

The teacher gives his learners a text to be read before class. During the session, he tries to make sure that the text is well understood. After listening to a short lecture related to the topic of the text, he gives them a question to be answered while using the information already read. Alternatively, before giving students a task, they may be instructed to work in pairs or groups so as to answer some questions which are related to the lecture that they will have to listen to (Sanabria 2004).

- *Inferencing and Elaboration*

After giving a short lecture, the teacher instructs his learners to make some inferences based on a previously read text outside class, in addition to any other background knowledge they have.

- *Inferencing*

Students can be given questions to be answered after listening to a lecture. Then, they are asked to draw inferences related to the relationship between concepts and ideas of the lecture.

- *Comprehension Monitoring*

The teacher may divide a lecture into different parts. He stops after presenting each part to ask the students to make guesses as to what will be tackled in the next part. After listening to each following part learners will have to adjust their comprehension, and make the necessary corrections.

➢ *Summarisation*

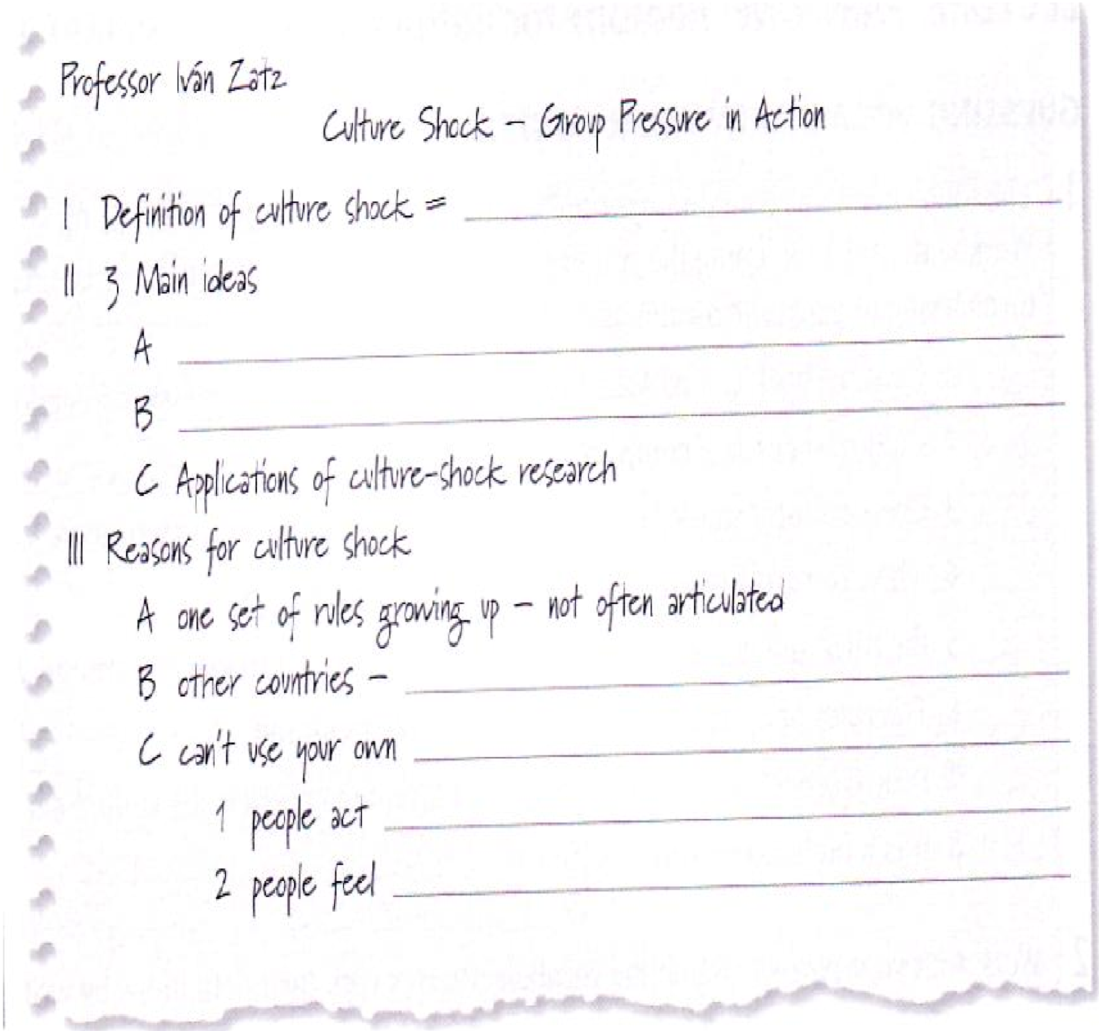
After dividing the lecture into parts, the teacher asks his learners to make a summary following each section they listen to. He may supply them with some key words to help them complete their summary (Sanabria 2004). Alternatively, the teacher may ask learners to use their notes in order to give a summary of the lecture they already listened to (Lynch 2004). In the early stages of the teaching of summarization, he may give them a summary with blanks so as to fill in with the necessary information, relying on their notes (Sanabria 2004).

➢ *Note-taking*

In order to help students learn how to record notes the teacher may first focus on the importance of using symbols and abbreviations (standard and personal). Practice in note-taking can be done through designing tasks with first listening and second listening and, then, answering some questions (Kisslinger and Rost 2002). The procedures of this type of task entail:

- taking notes during the first listening;
- answering questions about the general ideas of the lecture using the notes already recorded;
- recording further notes during the second listening;
- answering questions about details of the lecture using previously recorded notes;

- Asking learners to organize notes in a linear way. This can be done through presenting the students with an outline which contains some notes, and learners have to complete the missing notes. The following example is adopted from Sanabria (2004: 28).


Professor Iván Zatz

Culture Shock – Group Pressure in Action

I Definition of culture shock = ______

II 3 Main ideas

A ______

B ______

C Applications of culture-shock research

III Reasons for culture shock

A one set of rules growing up – not often articulated

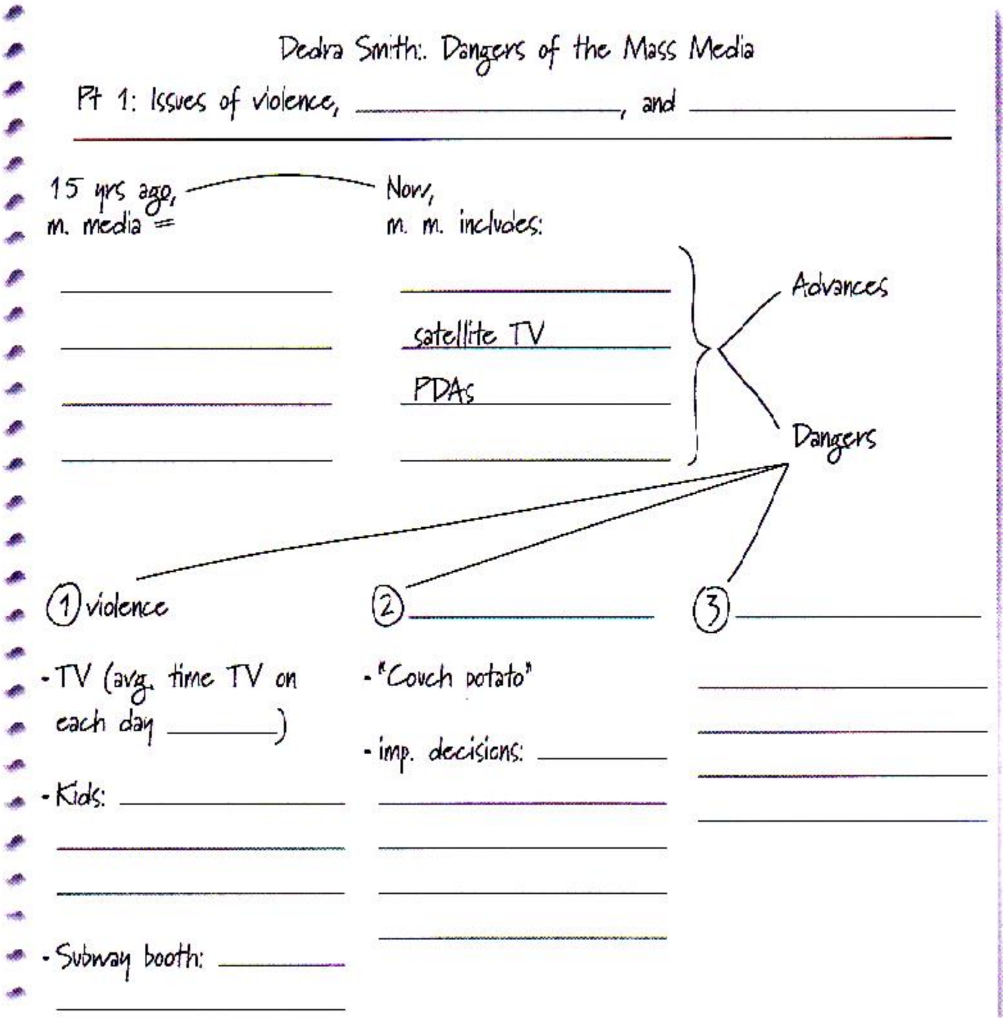
B other countries – ______

C can't use your own ______

1 people act ______

2 people feel ______

- In the same way, learners can be asked to re-organise their notes in a non-linear way. The following example, which is adopted from Sanabria (2004: 93), illustrates this form of recording notes.



It may be worth adding that the teacher can supply the students with sets of key words related to different parts of the lecture, and learners have to listen to each part and take notes using the key words (Campbell and Smith 2009). He can also model the strategy of note-taking through giving students a sample of his notes.

➢ *Orchestrating Some Strategies*

After taking notes, the teacher can ask his learners to provide a summary based on their notes, and to check their comprehension through working with their classmates and asking questions to the teacher about the relationship between the main and supporting ideas. Finally, students can be given transcripts of the lecture to check their notes. In this way, students employ different strategies: note-taking, peer cooperation, asking for clarification, comprehension monitoring, and inferencing.

So far, the focus has been on explicit strategy instruction. The second option of strategy instruction is awareness training, which consists of lectures of specific lecture comprehension strategies, in addition to discussions about the effectiveness of strategy use (Cohen 1998). The present section proposes implementing this type of training through podcasts. A podcast is an online audio or video file that can be downloaded and viewed/ listened to on a mobile device or on a personal computer (Dudney and Hockly 2007).

Such podcasts aim to reinforce in-class explicit strategy training and, hence, students should be assigned the lecture podcasts while working on explicit strategy instruction. Each lecture podcast may comprise a brief introduction, a brief theoretical background− which revolves around definitions− and practical examples of lecture comprehension strategies. After listening to a particular podcast, students should be engaged in classroom discussions concerning their problems, the way the strategies may help them, the way strategy use can be further improved.

In a study by O’Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007), for example, some podcasts aimed to summarise concepts already covered in class and provided instances to assist students in generalizing the strategies to other contexts. Other podcasts sought to build on concepts discussed in the classroom and at the same time prepare students to the following class. Still other podcasts aimed to introduce the material that will be dealt with in the next class. After each podcast, students had to complete a quiz to assess their comprehension of the presented material. In the classroom, students engaged in discussions. The following table illustrates how note-taking was instructed. It is adapted from (O'Bryan and Hegelheimer 2007).

Topic	Homework (due on date assigned)
Unit 3:key words, symbols abbreviations Unit 3:visually representing relationships	Downloading the notes of the two students. Watching the video podcast 'taking notes during a lecture'. Completing the quiz.
Taking notes: in class practice	Review video podcast
Taking notes: in class practice	Listen to the podcast: 'tips on taking notes in class'

Table 4. 1. A Sample Lesson of Integrating Podcasts in Teaching Lecture Comprehension Strategies

Before class, students had to watch a podcast about strategies for taking notes, and then view two students recording their notes from the same lecture: one of them ended with an effective record of notes (as he wrote only key words, used abbreviations, and visually presented relations) and the second ended with an ineffective list of notes (because he tried to record every word in a paragraph format rather than visually presenting the information). Students had to download the two versions of the notes from the website created specifically for the study. They also had to complete a quiz at the end to check their comprehension of the podcast. In the following class, a discussion about differences between effective and ineffective note-taking was launched along with practice of the strategy. In class practice was also paralleled by some podcasts to be viewed, or reviewed, outside class.

One of the benefits of using this technology is that it allows students to spend additional time working on the concepts taught in class *outside* of the class (O'Bryan and Hegelheimer 2007). From the perspective of the interactionist theory, rephrasing as well as repeating key words and ideas is a way of making input salient (i.e., noticed) to learners, which will ultimately increase the likelihood of students' learning of such input (Chapelle 2003). Additionally, podcasts extend class time, giving the teacher more opportunities to meet the needs of students to practise more their listening skills.

Examples of studies which used podcasts as a way of strategy instruction are those of O'Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) in addition to Weinberg *et al.* (2011). In both studies, podcasts were perceived by students positively and motivating. Furthermore, Winberg *et al.* (ibid.) reported an increase in the use of lecture comprehension strategies that were presented in the podcasts.

Based on Weinberg *et al.*'s study (ibid.), the following podcast lectures are suggested according to this section's main goal which is teaching lecture comprehension strategies:

1. The importance of strategy use: this lecture helps learners become aware of the importance of strategies in understanding their lectures;

2. Preparing for the lecture before and when arriving in class: this lecture introduces students to those strategies that they should employ before any lecture listening. The strategies may encompass: advance organization, resourcing (i.e., pre-reading);

3. In-class strategies: this lecture concerns the set of strategies that the students can use while processing their lectures. Examples include: directed attention, selective attention, elaboration, inferencing, questioning for clarification, summarization, self-encouragement, lowering anxiety;

4. Self-regulation of lecture listening: through this lecture students should be taught to monitor and evaluate their comprehension, solve their problems. As they try to solve their problems they can have recourse to other strategies like peer cooperation, asking for clarification, reading materials outside the class, inferencing.

5. Best practices in note-taking: this lecture focuses on the effective ways through which students can take notes.

As far as the last point is concerned, it may be worth mentioning some suggestions to instructors regarding techniques of helping students to effectively record notes. According to Rost (as cited in Jordan 1997), this strategy consists of different elements including topic-relation notes (like writing down a phrase that represents a section, translation, schematising through graphics organising relations), concepts-ordering notes (such as listing topics in order, numbering, labelling notes as example or conclusion… , indicating relations between topics through abbreviations and/or arrows…,), focusing notes (for instance, highlighting through the use of colours and underlining, de-highlighting through writing in parentheses).

When teaching note-taking it is crucial to make it clear to students that it is not useful to record every word spoken by the lecturer. Consequently, learners should be encouraged to employ symbols and abbreviations that they will be able to remember later when revising their notes (Wallace 2004). There are three kinds of symbols and abbreviations, which are called: field symbols and abbreviations, commonly used symbols and abbreviations, personal symbols and abbreviations (ibid.).

As for the first type, it involves those symbols and abbreviations that are part of the subject area of the student. In the case of linguistics, ‘NP’ may stand for the phrase ‘Noun Phrase’. Concerning the second kind, it comprises symbols and abbreviations which are widely used and understood. For instance, ‘i.e.’ and ‘%.’ which respectively mean ‘that is’ and ‘per cent’. Finally, it may be helpful for a learner to create his own personal symbols and abbreviations for words that he uses very frequently, such as ‘lings’ which may be employed to stand for ‘linguistics’.

Recording notes can be done in linear or non-linear ways (Wallace 2004, Jordon 1997). The former involves vertical listings of the lecture's notes. It can be through separating sections and sub-sections using numbers, in addition to space, indentions, and colours. The latter form of taking notes entails a graphic representation of the lecture; it consists of writing the main topic, that is boxed or ringed, from which ideas emanate.

To have an accurate record of information, students should be encouraged to edit their notes. That is, they need to revise the notes, check for accuracy, fill in the gaps, correct if necessary, and re-write the notes in a more organized way (Van Blerkom 2009). Finally, students should review their lecture notes on a regular basis in order to store and maintain the information in long-term memory. Reviewing the notes will make learners actively involved in the learning process, and will reduce the amount of time they need to study before the exams (ibid.).

After learners have explicitly been instructed in the different lecture comprehension strategies, they will have to regularly apply such strategies in their lecture listening. Therefore, the individual teacher may opt for the framework of Chamot *et al.* (1999) so as to further enhance students' maintenance of their repertoire of strategies. The framework involves four stages– planning, monitoring, problem-solving, evaluation. Table 4.2. in the following page illustrates how the different lecture comprehension strategies are related to these four processes.

Strategy	Process
Metacognitive Advance organization	Planning
Directed attention	Monitoring Planning
Selective attention	Monitoring
Comprehension monitoring	Monitoring
Problem identification	problem-solving
Evaluation	Evaluation
Cognitive Inferencing	Monitoring problem-solving
Elaboration	elaboration Monitoring problem-solving
Note-taking	Monitoring
Summarization	Monitoring
Resourcing	Monitoring problem-solving planning
Socio-affective Questioning for clarification	Monitoring problem-solving
Cooperation	Monitoring problem-solving
Lowering anxiety	Monitoring problem-solving
Self-encouragement	Monitoring problem-solving

Table 4.2. Lecture Comprehension Strategies and Processes

In the first process, which entails planning, the instructor asks students to prepare a plan for their lecture listening. At this level, they can employ a number of lecture comprehension strategies, like advance organization, resourcing through reading available references partly given by the teacher, and summarizing materials they read outside the classroom, elaboration.

During the lecture listening, the instructor reminds students to self-monitor their comprehension of the lecture by using strategies as paying attention to details, activating their background knowledge, taking notes, making inferences, checking their understanding.

When students encounter difficulties, they are expected to find solutions, through the use of different lecture comprehension strategies. First, they need to lower their anxiety and to have recourse to positive self-talk. Then, they may employ a number of strategies, such as: asking questions, resourcing, inferencing, elaboration.

Finally, after the lecture listening task has been completed students need to reflect on how well they went on it. As far as Chamot *et al.* are concerned: **“ Strategic students assess whether they met their goals for the task and if they did not, why they did not meet those goals and what they can do differently next time”** (1999: 27)**.**

In order to further help students develop autonomy in consciously focusing on the above processes– planning, monitoring, problem-solving, evaluation– teachers can develop a checklist (Vandergrift 1999, Rubin as cited in Cohen 1998). The checklist should comprise the different lecture comprehension strategies that students need to employ during the four processes. Before lecture listening, students may have recourse to the checklist to guide them in preparing themselves. After the task of lecture comprehension, students check whether they considered using the necessary strategies.

This section suggests the following typical lesson in teaching lecture comprehension. It can be designed after systematic instruction in lecture comprehension strategies. The title of the lecture is differences between RP and standard American English.

1. ***Pre-listening***:
Elaboration: discussion of the differences between RP and standard American English.
Planning strategy use: discussion of the possible strategies to use during listening.

2. **While listening**:
Learners are asked to listen and take notes of the main ideas.
Learners have to answer questions related to the main ideas of the lecture.
Learners listen again and take notes to add more details to.
Learners answer some questions related to details of the lecture.
Learners check their note with each other.
Learners organize their notes in the form of an outline or mind map.

3. **Post listening:**
Learners can be asked to write a summary using their notes.

Learners discuss with their teacher the difficulties they faced in order to find some solutions. Discussion should highlight strategy use using a checklist.

Having reviewed the different ways of assisting students in developing and maintaining lecture comprehension strategies, it is now worth discussing in detail how teachers can manage to prepare, design, and implement strategy instruction. Hence, the following sections will highlight what roles instructors may assume, and the steps they need to follow in strategy training.

4.2.1.1. Teachers' Roles

Under strategy instruction, the individual teacher has different roles, including those of a diagnostician, a trainer, a language learner (Cohen 1998), and a provider of support through scaffolding (Chamot *et al.* 1999). As a diagnostician, the teacher needs to make his learners aware of their strategies. He is also supposed to uncover their repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies, so as to decide which strategies are to be included in the instruction. Identifying the learner's strategies can be done through interviews, diaries, think-aloud tasks. However, it may be worth pointing out, at this level, that a major obstacle which teachers, in the Section of English, encounter is the overcrowded classrooms. A teacher may have many classes, each one comprising not less than thirty students. To overcome this obstacle, this section suggests conducting classroom discussions, group interviews, or stimulated recall. These three methods may be more effective in terms of cost and time.

In classroom discussions and group interviews, the usual procedure is setting a task for the students and, then, giving them few minutes to reflect on the strategies they used. After that, a whole-class discussion is launched, or small group interviews are conducted to infer the students' lecture comprehension strategies. For the method of stimulated recall, it requires videotaping learners during lecture listening. Once they finish, the teacher plays back the videotape, pausing the tape from time to time, and asking his learners to remember what they were thinking of at that moment captured on the tape. This is useful in helping learners recall their thought processes.

A second role of the teacher is that of a trainer who trains his learners to develop their repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies. He can start the training with the simplest strategies, then move to more complex ones (like advanced organisation which requires setting a goal to decide upon which lecture comprehension strategies should be employed).

During strategy training, the instructor as a language learner should empathize with students. When the teacher puts himself in the role of his language learners, he will become more actually aware of the kind of challenges and problems confronting them, as well as more sensitive to their needs. Another function that the teacher can play as a language learner is that of being an expert language learner, by sharing his experiences with the students. For example, he can demonstrate the lecture comprehension strategies that he used, in order to have the good level of proficiency in lecture listening that he has achieved.

Last but not least, the instructor has to assume the role of a provider of support. In this regard, a challenge that he may face, during strategy instruction, is determining when and how to scaffold instruction, i.e., to provide the appropriate amount of support. In the beginning, learners may face some obstacles to developing their metacognition and, hence, they need explicit and strong scaffolds. As the students start to apply their strategies independently, the instructor needs to reduce explicit promptings. The rest of the section will outline some scaffolding strategies as suggested by Chamot *et al.* (1999).

A. Scaffolding: Ways to provide explicit, additional support when learners need it:

- If learners have trouble remembering the full range of strategy choices, the teacher can create a poster and refer them to it;

- If students have trouble choosing a strategy, the teacher offers one or two choices and lets them choose one of them;

- If trainees have difficulty applying a particular listening strategy, the teacher provides some guided practice opportunities.

- If learners understand a particular strategy but are reluctant to use it, the teacher may try a mini-experiment to prove the strategy's effectiveness. A listening strategy experiment provides an opportunity for students to compare the results of a listening comprehension task that was completed without applying the strategy to the results of one completed with the help of that strategy.

It may be worth adding that these scaffolds indicate that the teacher is concerned about his learners' progress. Showing such commitment to students' success has a positive impact on their motivation.

B. Scaffolding: Ways to reduce explicitness when students are applying the strategies more independently:

- Instead of telling students which strategies to employ, the teacher lets them choose the strategies themselves;

- Instead of verbal reminders to opt for a particular lecture comprehension strategy, the instructor should direct the students' attention to a poster of choices.

4.2.1.2. Steps to Enhance Students' Metacognition

The individual instructor has to consider a number of issues when planning the training (Cohen 1998). The first step is to determine the students' proficiency level as well as the amount of time needed to be allotted to the instruction. Second, lecture comprehension strategies should be selected in the light of what strategies the students already employ. The third step in designing strategy instruction is to prepare the necessary materials and activities. The instructor may choose to use pre-prepared materials or adapt them from different resources.

After choosing the option of the training, the teacher should consider an ongoing evaluation and revision of strategy instruction. Criteria for evaluation may include: improved students' performance, maintenance of the strategies over a long period, positive change in the students' attitudes towards strategy training and language study.

Finally, the effectiveness of strategy training does not rely only on teacher's know-how concerning preparing, designing, and implementing the instruction, but it is also largely dependent on whether the teacher believes in the importance and the feasibility of conducting the training. This will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.1.3. Teachers' Beliefs

Beliefs are, according to Borg (2005), one aspect of a teacher's cognition. They are the unobserved dimension of language teaching– what teachers know, think, and believe. They direct teacher's choices and practices concerning, for example, choice of methodology, design of lessons, selection of tasks and texts, and ways of assessing learners.

Teacher' beliefs can impact the implementation of strategy instruction in different ways. First, if the teacher thinks that successful lecture comprehension is the result of ability alone which is relatively fixed, it follows that less skilled listeners are powerless to change and, consequently, strategy instruction is useless. Secondly, the individual teacher may hold the assumption that lecture comprehension strategies cannot be taught, or that strategy instruction is time consuming and effort demanding. Such beliefs hinder him from trying to teach his learners how to listen. Therefore, the following beliefs are important to hold: effective strategy use can determine students' success (Chamot *et al.* 1999), strategy instruction is feasible, and trying out new techniques so as to help learners is part of teachers' professional development. As far as the last point is concerned, it may be worth mentioning that it is seeking to develop professional competence to improve teaching practices that makes the difference between teachers with many years' experience and those with one year's experience repeated many times (Ur 1996).

Finally, under strategy instruction, the task of the teacher shifts from the exclusive teaching of language partly through listening, to teaching how listen as well. The learner's attention is not merely drawn to the language and content being learnt, but also to learning how to listen in that language, which will ultimately result in greater independence and autonomy. Nevertheless, many teachers, especially those who still assume the role of the teacher to be the fountain of knowledge, may be reluctant to accept such a new role and to give up some control over learning. Consequently, they do not consider it worthwhile to go through strategy instruction.

Teacher education programmes should seek to change such beliefs and encourage teachers to adopt strategy training. In this line of thought, Borg maintained that:

> **acknowledging these prior cognitions, making them explicit and providing teachers with opportunities to examine and reconsider these in the light of new information and experience are thus important elements in the process of teacher learning**. (2008: 276)

In order to further encourage the individual teacher to implement strategy training in his classroom, Graham (1997) suggested adopting training across the department as a whole. Not only can resources be pooled and information exchanged, but a joint venture may heighten the motivation of teachers who are apprehensive about embarking upon the training.

In addition to developing students' metacognition in lecture comprehension, there is a need to acquaint them with the structure of lectures. The aim is also enhancing effective processing of lectures. The following section is an attempt to explore this issue.

4.2.2. Developing Students' Schematic Knowledge: A Genre-Based Approach

In order to further facilitate the processing of linguistics lectures, students should be aware of the lectures' structure, in terms of two features: stages and lexical phrases (see section 1. 3.). Regarding the first feature, Young (1994) pointed out that EFL learners experience great difficulty in comprehending university lectures and, therefore, the researcher argued that familiarizing students with the different stages of this genre will further increase effective processing of information.

Arguments for the importance of teaching the second feature– lexical phrases– are based on the premise that while native speakers of English can be expected to have knowledge of the function of such language items, non-native speakers are much less likely to have this understanding (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992). Native speakers build up an impressive repertoire of thousands of lexical phrases and in doing so: **"they can rely on floods of authentic input… Time is hardly an issue: uptake of chunks begins in early childhood and seems to carry on more or less until life's end."** (Boers and Lindstromberg 2009: 39). Yet, for EFL learners **"It is clear that the input and time available to teenagers and adults learning a foreign language in a classroom setting cannot amount to anything like what is available to native speakers."(**ibid.). If this is the case, then, it is necessary to help EFL learners attain knowledge of these language chunks. This section suggests a genre-based approach to making students aware of the structuring patterns of lectures.

Genre pedagogy was originally developed in Australia during the 1980s. At that time, teachers believed that learners should be provided with opportunities to use extended stretches of language, or discourse, to achieve a communicative purpose in a given context, rather than simply be given opportunities for memorizing isolated vocabulary and grammatical structures. Consequently, curriculum writers sought to model a workable pedagogy for explicit intervention. They looked into the work of Halliday, his colleagues, and students working within the field of systemic functional linguistics which systematically links language to its social context (see section 1.2.3.).

The theory had been interested in investigating the way language varies from a context to another. It also investigated, within that variation, the relatively stable underlying patterns that organize texts. The exploration and description of these patterns and their relationship to language variation was the source which the genre pedagogy exploited in the field of writing instruction. In this line of thought, Feez maintained that Halliday's SFL helped teachers of writing, as it provided them with a model that focused on:

> **whole texts and their organisation… . This means that when teachers are helping their students create texts for different purposes and audiences, they can point explicitly to what has to be done. Students no longer have to guess what is expected when they write.** (2002:55)

It was believed that explicitly exposing students to the structures of different genres can provide a short cut for the processing and production of written texts. Genre pedagogy began with Martin and Rothery who investigated and categorized many hundreds of samples of primary school student writing. The different types of genres that they identified and described were distinguished by distinctive patterns of lexical, grammatical, and cohesive choices which constituted the function of the stages of the genres. This body of research has continued to develop in response to the issues raised by teachers working across education (Feez ibid.).

Genre pedagogy was presented to teachers in the form of a cycle specifically developed for the teaching and learning of writing. The present section proposes adapting this genre-based cycle to instruct EFL university students into the spoken genre of lectures. The argument for using this approach in listening is based on Paltrige's view (2007) that genre pedagogy should not exclude the other language skills.

The cycle comprises a number of phases, which are: building knowledge of the field; modelling the text; joint construction; independent construction. During the first phase, the individual teacher needs to build up students' knowledge of the topic. At this level, the focus is on the content of information of the lecture.

The second phase is devoted to familiarizing students with the structuring patterns of lectures using samples of lectures which clearly demonstrate the key features of this genre. Students explore with their teacher the formal schematic structure with respect to the different stages as well as the various macro- and micro-organizers. The content of the lectures of this stage should be about the field that students have already explored in the previous phase of building knowledge. At this phase, a number of activities can be designed and implemented (Labauer 1984). The teacher may provide students with a complete sample of a lecture and, then, ask them to:

- look for particular stages;

- find particular macro- and/or macro-organizers. For instance, learners can be asked to indicate the macro-organizers which show what the overall topic of the lecture is about, or a shift in main ideas, or summary of what has been said, or relationships between ideas and concepts.

During the joint construction phase, learners can further work on other samples of lectures with the help of their instructor. However, if the individual teacher sees that learners could attain sufficient knowledge of the structure of lectures, then, he may skip this stage, and move to the final phase, which is independent construction of the genre by learners.

A useful activity is the use of pseudo-close lecture samples, in which students are given lectures with blanks to be filled with ideas and, after that, they are asked to clarify their choices. The blanks may be different types of macro- and micro-organizers. It is worth pointing out that this is not a true close activity as the blanks are not placed every *nth* word (Labauer 1984).

A second activity is called hypothesis making using lecture samples, which may be divided into parts. The instruction is to ask students to make predictions of what follows. This entails making hypotheses based on relating backwards and forwards to other information. Students are constantly asked questions like, where is the lecture heading? What will come next? How do you know? Is this important information? (ibid.1984). Additionally, students can be given a lecture with scrambled stages so as to reorder them. In doing so, they may use the different macro-organizers.

Eventually, it is worth adding that with regard to micro- and macro-organizers Willis (2003) suggested making students aware of the importance of such a type of phrases. Awareness raising partly includes showing to students how this phenomenon exists in their mother tongue. It may also be helpful to group lexical phrases according to their functions.

Finally, students should not be taught only how to manage to take charge of their lecture listening, but they should also be prepared for their exams. This will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.3. Testing Lecture Comprehension

Tests are part of every class students take, including lecture-based classes. Besides the task of teaching students lecture comprehension, teachers usually face another challenge which is related to assessment. What is the effective way of assessing learners? And how can a teacher design tests which serve as motivating learning experiences rather than anxiety-provoking threats? These questions are usually addressed by teachers each academic year. The present section attempts to provide a user-friendly presentation of the principles underlying classroom tests of students' lecture comprehension. The focus is on: validity, reliability, and practicality.

The first step in testing is to define the construct to be measured (Hughes 1989). This means that the test should tap into the abilities which are theoretically hypothesized to underlie lecture comprehension. For instance, in Hansen and Jensen' test specifications (1994) the taxonomy of Power (1986) was adopted to evaluate students' lecture listening with reference to global understanding (i.e., understanding major themes and topics of the lecture) and local understanding (i.e., understanding specific items such as identifying key terms and extracting information).

After that, the task is the make the items representative of the construct. Following Hansen and Jensen' test specifications (1994), the items revolve around global and local questions to evaluate global and local comprehension, respectively. Global questions seek to assess the following abilities: identifying major themes or ideas, identifying purpose and scope of the lecture, identifying and inferring relationships between ideas. Local questions are used to assess the following students' abilities: extracting details, recognizing key terms, deducing meaning of words from context, identifying supporting ideas and examples.

A further issue which has recently been related to validity is whether the test is biased for the best. This entails **"the degree of strategic involvement on the part of the teacher and students in preparing for, setting up, and following up on the test itself"** (Brown 2001: 34). According to Swain (1984, cited in Brown 2001), a test can be said biased for the best if the teacher offers appropriate review and preparation for learners, and suggests strategies which are beneficial. It may be worth adding that, teachers can assess their learners' test-taking strategies through Brown's questionnaire (2002) which comprises rating scale items. The scores from such items will tell how good a test-taker he is.

As it is showed in the table 4.3., strategies for taking tests are divided into three categories based on the time when they are used: before, during, or after the test. Strategies before the test are meant to familiarise the test-taker with the test, and encourage him to practise. At this stage, the teacher may further assist learners through providing them with more information about the test (the topics to be included, the type of the items), giving practice activities that are similar to those of the test, encouraging group work.

During the test, students can have recourse to other strategies. Before the day of the test, the role of the teacher is to remind students look over the whole test so as to figure out the time needed for each item, advise learners to concentrate as carefully as possible and, finally, to warn them a few minutes before the end of time so that they proofread their answers and catch careless errors.

Before The test	a. Getting all the necessary information about the test through asking the instructor about what the test will cover, the topics that will be more important, the kind of items (essay, multiple-choice…), the length of the test; b. looking back at previous tests to familiarize oneself with the teacher's way of designing items; c. Reviewing the material by skimming the teacher's material as well as one's own materials. This strategy includes students outlining major points and writing examples; d. Taking practice tests and doing exercises that are similar to those of the test; e. Forming a study group: students can work together to further review the material and do more exercises; f. Positive self-encouragement and getting a good night's rest before the test;
During the test	a. Going to the classroom early to relax; b. Looking over all the parts of test; c. Estimating how much time is needed for each part or item; d. Concentrating carefully.
After the test	a. Paying attention to teacher's feedback and asking him questions about the test if necessary; b. Making a plan to pay attention to one's points of weakness, so as to be better prepared for future tests.

<u>Table 4.3.</u> Strategies for Taking Tests (adapted from Brown 2002)

Strategies after the test encourage the test-taker to benefit from his test-taking experience. The teacher can at this stage assist learners by giving feedback on things that each student did well and what he did not well (in addition to highlighting the reasons), encouraging questions from students, advising test-takers to pay attention to points on which they are weak.

A second principle in testing is reliability. It can be established through some procedures which include: familiarising students with the testing techniques, providing clear instructions, and avoiding ambiguous items (Hughes 1989). Brown (2001) further added that the teacher should ensure that all students receive the same quality of input through making sound amplification clearly audible to every learner, and video input− if used− visible to all students.

Another principle which makes the test effective is practicality. A practical test is the one which is administered within appropriate time constraints, and has a scoring evaluation that is specific and time-efficient (Brown 2001). To develop a practical test, the teacher can consider the following questions:

- Are administrative details clearly established before the test?
- Can students complete the test within the set time frame?
- Are all the materials ready?

- Is the scoring system feasible in the teachers' time frame?

- Are the methods for reporting the results determined in advance?

To sum up, the first part of this chapter has so far highlighted mainly the importance of teaching EFL university students how to succeed in lecture-based classes. The following part will be confined to a number of issues addressed specifically to lecturers, as it will provide them with some ways regarding how they can present their lectures.

4.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURERS

The aim of this section is to highlight some of the skills and strategies that lecturers can use in order to deliver their lectures effectively. It shares one common goal with the previous sections, which is increasing effective students' processing of lectures. The first concern will be about the skills that lecturers need to have. They range from preparing the lecture to evaluating it, along with generating interest, explaining and presenting information. Secondly, the section will argue for the importance of using the visual mode during lectures. The third issue will be about some of the teaching methods that can be used along with lectures.

4.3.1. Lecturers' Skills

Students usually have expectations of effective lecturers. Nicholls (2002) summarised these expectations under three main headings: clarity of presentation, scholarship, and willingness to develop students. Clarity of presentation means that the lecturer should be able to: present materials clearly and logically, enable students to understand the basic principles of the subject, be clearly heard, make material intelligibly meaningful, and maintain continuity in the course. The criterion of scholarship requires the lecturer to: show an expert knowledge of subject; illustrate practical applications of the theory of subject; refer to latest developments in the subject; make links between theory and practice. Finally, willingness to develop students entails that the lecturer should: readily consider students' viewpoints; allow questions during lectures; stimulate students to think independently and critically.

Such characteristics require a number of skills, which are: explaining, presenting information, lecture preparation, generating interest, and evaluating lectures (Brown and Atkins 2002). Each of these skills will be further elaborated throughout the following sections.

4.3.1.1. Explaining

Explaining involves making connections between facts and ideas so as to help students understand. Bligh (2000) suggested different types of explanations: regulative, analytical, temporal, and causal. Regulative explanations are based on stating the rule and generating examples. For instance, a lecturer may explain the concept of free morpheme in linguistics, and then he illustrates it through examples.

Analytical explanations entails explaining something in terms of its constituent parts. This takes the form of X,Y, and Z are different and together they can make W. For example, the lecturer may explain how inflections and derivational morphemes are elements of one type of morphemes, which is bound morphemes.

Temporal explanations give temporal comparisons of states of affairs or events on a time dimension. An example may be drawing a timeline showing the different linguistics schools from traditional language studies, to structuralism, and moving to Chomsky's different models, till systemic functional linguistics.

Finally, the function of causal explanations is to highlight causes. In linguistics this can be found when discussing the causes which made theorists propose a new model or theory as a reaction to a previous framework. Focusing on causal explanations may also be through showing the causes that make the morphemes 's' of the plural, or the 'ed' of the simple past, be pronounced differently in various contexts.

Whatever the type of the explanation is, the lecturer should rely on using repetition and paraphrasing of key points. As far as Brown and Atkins (2002) are concerned, expressing the same idea in different forms can trigger ideas and associations that assist comprehension. It also allows students more time to process information (Chiang and Dunkel 1992).

Prior to each lecture, lecturers should attempt to assist students in making connections between the lectures' new points and any prior information (Flowerdew and Miller 1992). This can be done through the use of advance organizers. These latter are information presented in the beginning of the lecture which can be used by learners to organize and interpret the new material (Mayer 2003). For Woolfolk (2001), an advance organizer is a statement of inclusive concepts to introduce and sum up the material that follows. The advantages of this teaching strategy include: directing learners' attention to what is important in the coming material, highlighting relationships among ideas that will be presented, reminding students of the relevant information they already have (Woolfolk 2001). By placing prior knowledge in the context of the new knowledge being learnt, advance organizers create a scaffolding effect that enables students to understand and retain learning for longer periods of time. An advance organizer also functions to reduce information overload, and facilitates reorganization of materials (Bligh 2000) through outlining, arranging, and sequencing, the main idea of the new material in relation to what the learner already knows.

There are two types of advance organizers: expository and comparative (Ausubel 2000). The former type needs to be used with relatively unfamiliar materials to provide students with a conceptual framework, while the latter is used for relatively familiar learning materials to integrate as well as discriminate between new and existing ideas.

An example of how advance organizers can be employed in order to build students' background knowledge is found in Sanabria's

Academic Listening Encounters (2004). The textbook included advanced organizers in the form of short texts followed with questions, and activities in which learners have to match words with their definitions. Such tasks are designed in the beginning of each unit, and can be completed in groups or pairs.

Kisslinger and Rost (2002) also designed advanced organizers in their textbook. They included two sections entitled topic preview and vocabulary preview, in the beginning of each lecture listening, with the aim of preparing the students to the information of the lecture. The topic preview section revolves around discussions of the title and pictures. Vocabulary preview section contains three tasks. First, students are to be familiarised with ten to twelve key words. Second, learners have to complete an exercise using those words. The third task allows listeners to expand their vocabulary through varied activities which may contain more unfamiliar words.

Eventually, Rost (1994) maintained that lecturers are bound to generate a list of key concepts for learners so as to prepare before the lecture. Being familiar with the meaning of such concepts allows students to understand and build inferences during the lecture listening.

Another important issue to consider when explaining is that the lecture should not contain large quantities of information. In this context, Moore *et al.* suggested that **"Fifty minute lectures can only cover a limited number of points, concepts…. It is counterproductive to attempt to cram too much into any one learning session"** (1996: 35).

For Book (1999), a good lecture covers two or three main points with appropriate elaboration.

Since this is an EFL context, this section further proposes that teachers talk should be adjusted and modified according the students' level through the use of linguistic simplifications (Walsh 2011, Nizegorodcew 2007), which can take place at different levels like lexis, grammar, pronunciation. First, vocabulary may be simplified by employing simplified lexis and avoiding idiomatic expressions. Second, grammar can be modified through shorter and simpler utterances, fewer clauses. Third, pronunciation can be made understood by the use of slower, clearer articulated speech. These linguistic modifications should be delivered with slower rate of speech.

Finally, Walsh (2011) added the use of comprehension checks to ensure that students understand the teacher. Language items like, '*okay?*' or *'Right?'*(with a rising intonation) are among the comprehension checks which have the pedagogic function of verifying listeners' understanding of the lecture's content.

4.3.1.2. Presenting Information

Structuring information is another essential skill which affects learners' processing of the lecture. This chapter suggests structuring lectures of linguistics using Young's model of the stages of lectures, and the necessary lexical phrases, namely macro- and micro-organizers (see chapter one). The various organizers can also be categorized under a different classification, which comprises: signposts, frames, foci, and links (Brown and Atkins 2002).

Signposts are statements that signal the direction which the lecturer is going to take, for example '*today I am going to talk about* transformational generative grammar. *First* I will deal with the criticism that Chomsky put forward against structuralism. *Then* I will be presenting Chomsky's first model of grammar. *After that*….'. In this regard, it may be worth mentioning that it is useful, at the beginning of the teaching session, to provide an outline of the overall structure of the lecture to help learners build expectations of what they are going to hear (Jordan 1997, Bligh 2000). Frames, as '*let go from… to*…', are organizers which indicate the beginning and the ending of the main sections and sub-sections. Foci statements highlight key ideas, definitions and concepts. Finally, links connect the lecture to previous knowledge, and they link the ideas of the lectures.

In order to further increase comprehension, the lecturer can pause for some minutes at different times during the lecture so as to give students the opportunity to write information, update their notes, as well as ask for clarifications and explanations. This is what Sitler (1997) called the spaced lecture, and it is used to connect listening, note-taking, and learning. It can be implemented through dividing the lecture into sections and providing breaks between the sections (Flowerdew and Miller 1992).

4.3.1.3. Lecture Preparation

A useful way to get ready to give a lecture is to prepare a plan. There are four key issues to be taken into consideration when preparing lectures (Exley and Dennick 2004, Moore *et al.* 1996):

- The content: the topic of the lecture and the ideas to be included, as well as how the information should be presented and explained;

- The students: what students already know and what they need to learn from the lecture, in addition to the necessary resources for students' outside class reading;

- The lecturer's goals: the priorities and the aims of the lecture;

- The learning environment: the equipments available to the lecturer.

There are some questions which can be raised when preparing the lecture. The following questions are adapted from Brown and Atkins (2002). This section proposes adding to them one further question: what do students already know about the topic of the lecture?

- What are the central questions of the lecture?
- What do you expect the students to learn or understand from your lecture?
- Are the sections of the lecture clearly organized and clearly linked?
- Are the main ideas clear, accurate, and linked?
- Are the examples and illustrations appropriate?
- Will the section summaries and final summary be clear and coherent?
- What possible weaknesses are there likely to be in the presentation?
- How do you plan to get round these possible weaknesses?
- Are any audio-visual resources that might needed going to be available?

Table 4.4. Questions for Planning Lectures (adapted from Brown and Atkins 2002)

The process of preparing lectures may begin with reading the relevant literature concerning the topic. Accordingly, this will help refresh the lecturer's memory, as well as identify major themes and supporting details. At the meantime, decisions are to be made about the way the content will be structured using the different available aids, and the activities– like questions and problem solving tasks– to be included. If the session takes one hour and a half, then the lecturer needs to schedule and apportion time within that period to the essential themes and details. Finally, the teacher needs to decide how he will evaluate the effectiveness of the lecture.

The process of preparation also entails considering ways to increase students' motivation, which is of paramount importance as it will be displayed in the following section.

4.3.1.4. Generating Interests

The long-term, sustained learning may not take place unless the instructor provides, in addition to appropriate instructional practices, sufficient inspiration and enjoyment to build continuing motivation in learners (Dornyei 2007). This variable has been found to influence different aspects of learning. In the area of language learning strategies, for example, researchers, focusing on systematic variation in strategy use of certain groups of learners, found motivation as one of the factors which positively influence strategy use (Dornyei 2005).

From the field of listening comprehension comes another argument for the positive relationship between motivation and listening comprehension put forward by Vandergrift (2005), who argued that motivated students appear to engage more in metacognitive listening strategies. In lectures, Exkley and Dennick (2004) argued that one of the major problems of lecturing is the boring, monotonous presentation that results in reducing the students' concentration and comprehension. Nonetheless, if a student is motivated by the lecturer's approach to a subject then he is likely to become self-motivated and the lecture will have a strong influence. Furthermore, Brown and Atkins (2002) maintained that there are two factors which make a lecture increases learners' insight, stimulates them to think; read; and discuss: first, learners' motivation and, second, lecturer's preparation; explanation; and presentation. Therefore, it is crucial that lecturers try to boost their students' motivation.

Dornyei (2001), suggested some classroom techniques to generate and maintain learners' motivation. These techniques can be grouped under three main phases: creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation. Each phase will be discussed in the remaining of this section.

Motivational techniques cannot be applied in a vacuum. Rather, certain conditions have to be in place before any attempt to generate motivation. Such conditions are established in the first phase. This latter involves appropriate lecturer behaviours, pleasant and supportive environment, and appropriate group norms. Classroom strategies encompass: expressing commitments towards students' academic progress through offering to explain linguistics even individually or outside the class, showing concern when things are not going well, responding immediately when help is requested; establishing a norm of tolerance and accepting mistakes as a natural process of learning, using and encouraging humour; formulating with learners' appropriate rules of conduct in the classroom. The table 4.5. illustrates some classroom norms as suggested by Dornyei (2001).

For the students	• let's not be late for class. • Always write your home work. • Once a term can "pass".i.e., say you have not prepared.
for the lecturer	• The class should finish on time. • Tests should be marked within a specific period (for example, two weeks). • Always give an advance notice for a test.
For the students and the lecturer	• Let's try and listen to each other. • Let's help each other. • Let's respect each other's ideas. • It's ok to make mistakes. • Let's not make fun of each other's mistakes • We must avoid hurting each other (verbally or physically)

Table 4.5. Sample Set of Classroom Norms

(Adapted from Dornyei 2001: 46)

These classroom norms can be efficient if they are discussed and willingly adopted. To achieve this, a norm-building procedure can be implemented and which consists of:

- ✓ Formulating potential norms;
- ✓ Explicitly stating their purpose so as to enlist support for them;

- ✓ Discussing such norms in the classroom;
- ✓ Eliciting other norms from learners and discussing them too;
- ✓ Agreeing on mutually accepted list of norms.

Once the motivational conditions have successfully been established– that is the classroom is characterised by safe climate and good student-teacher relationship– the individual teacher should seek to generate initial motivation partly through creating realistic learner beliefs. This entails highlighting the difficulties that students may face in linguistics and the realistic rate of progress, as well as the different ways that may help students understand lectures of linguistics.

Another way of generating initial motivation is through increasing learner goal-orientedness, that is; agreeing with students on a number of goals, like individual goals related to passing exams or getting the minimum grade required for survival. The importance of setting goals stems from the fact that they direct attention and effort towards classroom tasks; they regulate the amount of effort needed; they adjust this effort according to the difficulties faced, and they encourage persistence. Drawing on previous research, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) proposed some principles underlying classroom goals, which are:

1. Goals should be clear and specific;
2. goals should be challenging, but at the same time realistic;

3. goals should have a stated completion date;

4. teachers should provide feedback that increases students' self-efficacy.

Finally, one of the most demotivating factors for learners is when they have to learn something that they cannot see the point of. Therefore, it is crucial that the lecturer communicates the relevance and the importance of the topic, by making a strong justification for the inclusion of the topic in the lecture. Students should be able to see how the lecture is relevant to the curriculum (Exkley and Dennick 2004).

After creating initial motivation it is important to maintain and protect students' motivation. Dornyei cautions that it is one thing to initially whet the students' appetite:

> **with appropriate motivational techniques, but unless motivation is actively maintained and protected, the natural tendency to lose sight of the goal, to get tired or bored…, to give way to attractive distractions will result in the initial motivation gradually petering out.** (2007: 728)

Lecturers maintain motivation as they make learning stimulating and enjoyable, build students' self-esteem as well as confidence, and promote cooperation among learners. At this level, there is a spectrum of strategies which includes: breaking the monotony of learning by using different organizing classroom formats (from whole-class organization to group work and pair work) as well as varying channels of communication (auditory and visual); diminishing language anxiety through reducing anxiety provoking elements, like avoiding social comparison, helping learners accept mistakes and a natural part of learning, making tests transparent and involving students in the negotiation of the final mark, encouraging students by drawing their attention to their abilities and strengths. As far as this last point is concerned, it may be worth pointing out that the teacher should try to promote effort attributions, which means encouraging learners not to ascribe their failure to their abilities, but to think about failure as a result of lack of effort, and if failure occurs in spite of hard work, then, the teacher should highlight the inadequacy of lecture comprehension strategies or test-taking strategies. Brown and Atkins explained the importance of effort attributions saying that:

> **Students are likely to initiate learning, sustain it, direct it, and actively involve themselves in it when they believe that success or failure is caused by their own *effort* or lack of it, rather than by factors outside their control such as ability, luck.**
> (2000:151)

Finally, the teacher can promote cooperative learning through setting up tasks that require learners to work together.

Having surveyed a wide range of motivational techniques, it is crucial to address the question of what may be the best way for implementing them. For classroom teachers, there is too much to pay attention to: content of the linguistics lectures, instructional practices, timing, administration, etc. In this context, Dornyei pointed out that

> **there is only one thing we should not attempt: to try and apply all these techniques we know at the same time. This would be the perfect recipe for teacher burnout… some of the most motivating teachers often rely on a few well-selected basic techniques**. (2007: 731)

Thus, what is needed is quality rather than quantity, and teachers should try to become good enough motivators rather than strive to achieve ‘supermotivator status’. Based on this point of view, Dornyei (2001) proposes an approach to implementing motivational techniques which uses the checklist in table 4.6.

Motivational techniques	**Tried it out**	**Part of my teaching**
<u>Creating basic motivational conditions</u> • *Appropriate teacher behaviours* expressing commitments towards students' success; showing concern when things are not going well; responding immediately when help is requested. • *Pleasant and supportive environment* establishing a norm of tolerance; accepting mistakes as a natural process of learning; encouraging humour. • *appropriate group norms* including a specific 'classroom rules' activity at the beginning of a course; explaining the importance of the norms; eliciting suggestions for additional rules from learners; asking for the students' agreement; making sure violations of rules do not go unnoticed;		
<u>Generating initial motivation</u> • *creating realistic learner beliefs* *p*ositively confronting the possible erroneous beliefs, expectations, and assumptions that learners may have about linguistics;		

raising learners' awareness about the difficulties they may face in module of linguistics; highlighting ways which contribute to success. • *increasing learner goal-orientedness* helping learners to set goals; drawing attention to classroom goals and how particular activities help attain them. Explaining the relevance of the lecture.		
<u>Maintaining and protecting students' motivation</u> • *making learning stimulating and enjoyable by breaking monotony* using different organizing classroom formats (whole-class tasks, group work, pair work); varying channels of communication (auditory visual). • *building students' self-esteem and confidence* reducing anxiety provoking elements: avoiding social comparison; helping learners accept mistakes and a natural part of learning; making tests transparent and involving students in the negotiation of the final mark. • *promoting cooperation among learners* Setting up tasks in which teams of learners are asked to work together.		

<u>Table 4.6.</u> Checklist for Implementing Motivational Techniques (Adapted from Dornyei 2001)

As a first step, the individual teacher should go through the various techniques and identify those that are already part of his teaching practice. Using Dornyei's aforementioned suggestions, he may further reinforce those techniques to make them more effective. Secondly, the instructor can select techniques which have not been part of his teaching and that he feels may work with his students.

After trying out motivational techniques in the classroom, the teacher puts a tick in the 'Tried it out' column. If the techniques work, he keeps using them until he has automated them to be able to tick off the 'Part of my teaching' column. After a while, he may be ready to try other techniques.

Last, but not least, teachers need another important skill of lecturing which is evaluating their lecturing practices. This will be highlighted in the following section.

4.3.1.5. Evaluating Lectures

The main purpose of evaluating lectures is to improve them. Evaluation may take place based on different resources, such as students' notes, tests, and reactions; in addition to the lecturer's colleagues (Brown and Atkins 2002). Feedback from these sources can, then, be used to reflect on and evaluate linguistics lectures.

A useful source for evaluation is students' notes. The lecturer may from time to time borrow samples of learners' notes to compare them with his own notes. Examination of the notes should focus on whether the main ideas and supporting details were effectively recorded. Alternatively, short tests administered to learners are also useful for gathering feedback on one's teaching practices. The items of the test may ask learners to recall information and identify essential details.

For learners' reactions on a lecture, they can be gathered by lecturers through questionnaires or checklists. These instruments can be based on rating scales as the example of the checklist outlined in table 4.7. They can also be based on dichotomous items (yes/no) and open ended items. The main purpose is to get information from students concerning the lecture in terms of structure, clarity of explanations, effective use of audio-visual materials, and motivation.

Give your reaction to each separate item on the six-point scales below.

6 = very highly favourable	3 = slightly unfavourable
5 = highly favourable	2 = unfavourable
4 = favourable	1 = extremely unfavourable

Circle the number which most clearly describes your view.

1. the lecture was clearly structured	1 2 3 4 5 6
2. the main points were clear	1 2 3 4 5 6
3. the minor points were clear	1 2 3 4 5 6
4. the examples were relevant	1 2 3 4 5 6
5. the lecture was clearly audible	1 2 3 4 5 6
6. the lecture was interesting	1 2 3 4 5 6
7. the lecturer summarised key points effectively	1 2 3 4 5 6
8.the boards and other aids were used effectively	1 2 3 4 5 6
9. the lecture seemed well prepared	1 2 3 4 5 6

<u>Table 4.7.</u> An example of an Evaluation Checklist for Lecturers (Adapted from Brown and Atkins 2002: 40-42)

At last, another source of information on lectures may come from colleagues that the teacher invites to the classroom. An important step in this process is to agree on a set of criteria for evaluating the lecture. An observation scheme, like the one displayed in table 4.8., can be agreed on by teachers of the department in order to be used for peer observatiopn. After the observation, the teacher and his colleague can engage in feedback discussion.

Prompts	Strengths	weaknesses
Organization Delivery and space Clarity Content Accuracy Relevance Examples Motivation Audio-visual aids		

Table 4.8. An Observation Scheme for Peer Observation (Adapted from Exley and Dennick 2004: 151-152)

Richards and Farell (2005) also developed some procedures for peer observation of lessons which can be useful in recording the events of lectures. The procedures entail written narrative, field notes, and checklists. Written narrative is a narrative account of the lectures' events as a whole. Field notes consist of brief descriptions in the form of notes. They can be time-based, i.e., made at regular intervals (every fifteen minutes) or they may be linked to key stages in the lectures. Checklists are structured inventories which include features of the lecture, and that the observer completes while observing.

The ultimate aim of peer observation is to generate a community of teachers who are open to criticism, and keen to reflect on their practices so as to improve their teaching. Thus, Feedback has to be constructive and given in a sensitive way to avoid any negative feelings that may inhibit development. A useful process of observation can be through discussing the positive points first and, then, dealing with problem areas in the lecture along with some helpful suggestions for improvement (Exley and Dennick 2004). The colleague can go through this process in the following way:

1. asking the lecturer to describe positive points in the lecture;

2. responding positively, and if possible, further highlighting other positive points already observed;

3. asking the lecturer how he could deal with any problems related to the lecture presentation and content;

4. adding one's own suggestions for coping with such problems.

In addition to the aforementioned skills, lecturers can have recourse to the visual mode, and other teaching methods which can be employed with lectures. The following section will, first, discuss the visual mode– its impact and use – in a more detailed way.

4.3.2. Multimodal Aspects: The Visual Mode

Speech and writing are no longer seen as the only two dominant modes of communication, but as two different means by which one mode (language) is realized. Beyond this linguistic mode, there are other semiotic resources that contribute to meaning-making in different social practices (Crawford Camiciottoli 2007). Speech, for example, deploys verbal resources in addition to paralinguistic and extralinguistic features. In this regard, Mendelsohn wrote that in real world native speakers make

> **maximum use of clues to meaning from background noise, setting, what people wear, etc., (extralinguistic features), and to loudness and softness of speech, gesture, variation in voice quality, etc.,(paralinguistic features of communication).** (1994: 60)

This multimodal dimension refers to characteristics which **"combine and integrate the meaning-making resources of more than one semiotic modality– for example language, gesture, movement, visual images,... ."** (Thibault 2000: 311). As technological progress has rapidly been accelerating, this multimodal dimension has recently been introduced into the language classroom to help learners construct meaning (Stein 2000). This section will be confined with one semiotic modality: the visual mode.

The impact of the visual mode, in listening comprehension, has been documented within the literature to be beneficial to listeners' processing of the aural input. In this regard, it is suggested that the visual support is an important variable in comprehension as it results in increasing attention levels, comprehension of gist, in addition to motivation (Buck 2001).

In a lecture listening context, meaning is not derived solely from the lecturer, but also from other visual supports (Flowerdew and Miller 2005, Folwerdew 1994). Fisher (as cited in Ruhe 1996) explained this point saying that when listeners process visual and linguistic information, they are engaged in a process of cognitively matching the information of the visual mode with the information in the auditory mode, and they use the former to fill in any shortcomings in their comprehension of the latter. This matching process can assist students to predict, integrate, fill in, confirm, and infer meaning. Other advantages of the visual mode, in lecture comprehension, which were cited by Exley and Dennick (2004) include:

- Enhancing comprehension of a complicated idea or process;
- Maintaining learners' attention;
- Assisting students' memory, as learners may remember a visual explanation easily than words;
- Creating a relaxing environment.

The visual mode of communication encompasses graphics, diagrams, tables, texts, and can be delivered through a number of visual aids, such as whiteboard, overhead projection slides, PowerPoint, handouts, podcasts. The most widely available visual aid is the board which may be useful and relatively easy to use. The lecturer can progressively build up a summary of the lecture through presenting its organization of key ideas on one side, and using the other side for illustrations and further elaborations using different colours (Bligh 2000).

As for the overhead projector, the general advice is that the information of the lecture should not be condensed in the slides. The font size has to be big enough to be clearly seen by students: font 24 may be used. The transparency should contain few words: only main ideas and the details should be added orally (Race 2007). Different colours can be useful, in both whiteboards and slides (Exley and Dennick 2004). These points of guidance may also be applied when using PowerPoint with a data projector (ibid.).

Another way to present the visual mode in lectures is through handouts. The advent of better, faster, and cheaper photocopying technologies has led to a dramatic increase in the use of handouts. These latter can essentially be used for two reasons in the lecture (Exley and Dennick 2004): to provide information (handouts as information), and to provide an opportunity for activities (handouts as activity). As a source of information, handouts can be of different types depending on the information they include. On the one hand, they may contain a condensed summary of key ideas of the lecture, and as such, they are just printed versions of lectures. Students who take advantage of this type of handouts are mainly those who miss the lecture, as well those with a low language proficiency and note-taking ability. On the other hand, there is the provision of handouts that contain only certain information which would take students too long to copy down, such as tables. Finally, handouts may provide additional materials to be read after the lecture. More details, problems, case studies, and references for further reading can all be included in this kind of handouts.

In addition to being a source of information, handouts may contain spaces for a variety of activities. They are also called interactive handouts as they involve students' interaction with the given knowledge. An approach to using them could be through: inserting a text with some key words left blank and, then, asking students to find out the right words from their background knowledge of the lectures (ibid.). This task can be made more interactive by asking learners discuss and vote on the answers. The spaces (or links) encompass various kinds of information, such as incomplete definitions, partially drawn tables, sub-headings, and incomplete processes so that students fill in with arrows between the elements.

When designing handouts, it is crucial to ensure that they are effective. This requires making them: clear, readable, attractive and stimulating; well organized with appropriate headings, containing space (between paragraphs, at the top and bottom of the page) or a wide margin on one side to enable learners to insert their own notes if necessary (ibid.).

Handouts can be given at different points of time. If they contain summary of the main information and are designed to minimize note-taking, then they can be delivered at the beginning of the lecture with appropriate instructions. If they include additional materials, they could be used at the end. Interactive handouts may be employed at the beginning or at an appropriate time during the lecture.

To sum up, "**Handouts are an important adjunct to contemporary lecturing practice. They have a wide range of styles and uses and if designed correctly and used appropriately can enhance the quality of learning"** (Exley and Dennick 2004:114). Thus, whenever they are given, there should be clear instructions on their use, and lecturers should try to make sure they are being designed effectively.

Another visual option is the use of podcasts (see section 4.2.1. for a definition of podacsts). Talking about the spread of podcasting in education, Dudney and Hockly wrote that

> **it is becoming increasingly common…for professors to record lectures as podcasts, so that students who miss a class can download the lecture podcasts for later listening on their computers or mobile devices like an MP3 player.**
> (2007: 99)

From the pedagogical point of view, podcasts can serve different functions, which are: reviewing the lecture content, exemplifying difficult lecture concepts through elaboration, and preparing for the next class (O'Bryan and Hegelehimer 2007).

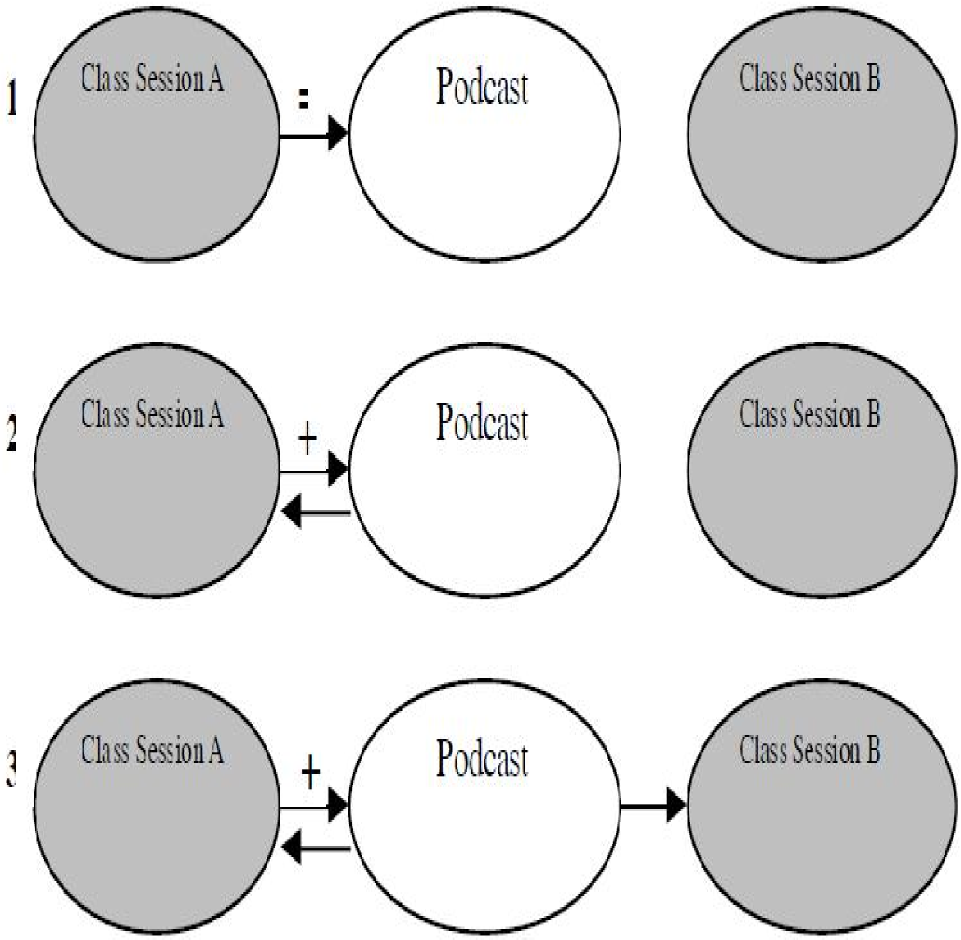


Table 4.9. Instructional Functions of Podcasts
(as adopted from O'Bryan and Hegelehimer 2007:166)

In the first case, the podcast duplicates the lecture content, whilst in the second the podcast adds relevant information to what was covered in the lecture and, therefore, provides more details. In the third case, the podcast builds on the second case, with the difference that the podcast also serves as a preparation for the subsequent lecture.

From the learners' perspective, podcasting makes the lecture content accessible to students at any time. It may be used as a revision tool (Evans 2008). At the meantime, it provides students with the opportunity for repeated listening to the lecture. Repeated listening was found to increase vocabulary learning and affect lecture comprehension strategy use. On the one hand, repeated vocabulary in the input is more likely to increase students' learning of such vocabulary (Chapelle 2003). Blough (2000) explains this point saying that if there is some learning in the first listening, repetition can have some consolidating effects and, hence, learning of the first occasion provides a conceptual framework and a pathway to give meaning to the second. On the other hand, each time a lecture is repeated students actively assess and, if necessary, shift their lecture comprehension strategy (Kiewra and Mayer 1991).

4.3.3. Using Lectures with other Teaching Methods

Teachers can employ other teaching methods in combination with lectures, such as buzz groups and horseshoe groups, case-study method, students' short talks (Bligh 2000). Each of these methods will be dealt with in the remaining of this section.

In buzz and horseshoe groups students discuss issues or problems of short periods within the lecture. While the former are groups of two to six members, the latter are amalgamations of two buzz groups in which chairs are arranged in a 'C' or 'U' shape. They can be used with classes of six to three hundred. In both types of groups, a task is first set individually, then students are encouraged to compare their answers and discuss. Tasks should be made specific, such as: 'List three possible reasons for….'. The objectives of using buzz and horseshoe groups include:

- Clarification: as lecturers think that they may not have their point understood, they can set a task for students to work on in groups. Clarification can be achieved by the students discussing with each other, or by the lecturer himself after offering an answer;

- Developing students' thinking ability: problem-solving tasks may enhance students' ability to apply, analyse, and evaluate information. A question like 'what is the difference between…..?' fosters analytic thinking, and a task requiring learners to evaluate, for instance, a theory may develop evaluative thinking. As a result, students can further comprehend and memorise information.

- Consolidation of understanding: one oft-repeated remark by students is: 'I have understood it at the time, but now I don't' (Bligh 2000). Hence, consolidation of previous learning is needed, and can be done through buzz or horseshoe groups;

- Feedback: buzz or horseshoe groups allow lecturers to receive feedback concerning their way of teaching, to evaluate the effectiveness of their lectures;

- Group work provides variety in the class which will positively affect learners' motivation.

Another class technique which can be used with lectures is the case study method, which involves a detailed study of a particular example. It usually entails **“consideration of an actual example requiring the synthesis of a large amount of different kinds of information, and the making of recommendations or decisions.”** (Bligh 2000: 246). An example is, thus, given to be carefully studied using the previously learnt information in different lectures.

Finally, in order to explore concepts already presented in the lecture, students may be asked to give short talks of, for instance, fifteen minutes length. Each talk requires a follow-up discussion by the class.

So far the previous sections have highlighted some suggestions as to how teachers can manage to teach lecture comprehension, and how lecturers can effectively deliver their lectures. What follows discusses the idea that both teachers and lecturers should be offered training to assist them in applying such proposals.

4.4. TEACHERS’ AND LECTURERS’ TRAINING

In order for learner strategy training to take place and for lectures to be presented in an effective way, teachers and lecturers need to develop the necessary skills. Based on their experience in teacher training, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) discovered that teachers need considerable exposure to the concepts of learning strategies, and repeated practice in designing and providing learning strategy training, before they feel comfortable with incorporating strategy instruction in their classes. As for lecture comprehension, O’Brien (as cited in

Flowerdew 1994) argued that there is the need to train lecturers, in addition to teaching students how to listen to lectures.

Training teachers can be part of pre-service or in-service training programmes (Cohen 1998). For learning strategy instruction, Cohen (ibid.) wrote that such programmes may include different methods of instruction, like: lectures, outside reading of journal articles and book excerpts describing learning/teaching experiences and issues, pair and small-group discussions, strategy activities, observation of classes instructed by teachers who have already incorporated strategy training, interactive sessions for practising and developing strategy-integrated lesson plans.

The training design can be based on theory and practice (ibid., O'Malley and Chamot 1990). First, theory provides the basic knowledge of lecture comprehension strategies and instructional techniques. Lectures and readings on the theoretical contexts in which strategy instruction has developed can provide a strong foundation for later practice.

Second, opportunities for practice should, after that, be given. At this level, the participants seek to experiment with different strategies and receive feedback from each other and from the trainer. Practice can be done through engaging in strategy use. For example, the trainees take diagnostic questionnaires assessing their own lecture comprehension strategies, engage in problem-solving discussions in which they discuss ways to approach a task and make strategy choices as well as evaluation. In this way, the trainees can experience the strategies before teaching them. Using Cohen's words:

> **By actively engaging in and reacting to authentic strategy use, the teachers-in-training can gain a better understanding of what to expect from their own students, as well as getting first-hand practice with generating multiple problem solving techniques (i.e. choosing their own strategies).** (1998: 86)

The trainees may also find it useful to observe authentic classroom sessions conducted by other teachers who already embedded strategies into their lessons. This can also be done through watching video tapes of class sessions taught by instructors who regularly teach strategies. The trainees, then, discuss and exchange ideas concerning aspects of strategy instruction that they observed or watched.

Another useful way of practice is through developing materials and integrating strategies into lesson plans. In-service teachers, for instance, can try to present lecture comprehension strategies in the lessons they already prepared, based on adapting existing course materials. Then, they share their lesson plans. This has the benefit of having access to a wide range of ideas concerning how to integrate the lecture comprehension strategies into their classes.

An example of a strategy training programme is that of Chamot and her colleagues (Cohen 1998). Based on informal assessment of teachers' needs, the researchers developed a content which included: giving the rational for teaching strategies, examples of students' strategies use, material in the target language for introducing the concepts of strategies to learners, suggestions for integrating strategies into the regular instructional programme, opportunities given to the trainees to develop their own strategy training. At the end of the programme it was concluded that the trainees found the most useful aspects in the training were: guidance on how to identify learners' strategies, working with a partner to integrate strategies into lessons.

As regards training lecturers in lecture presentation, this chapter suggests training teachers using the steps followed in training them to design strategy instruction. In this context, trainees should, first, be introduced to the literature concerning lectures and their organisation, in addition to useful techniques and skills of giving lectures. In his introductory course which aims at training teachers how to teach listening Rost (2009), for example, used:

- Short lecture clips of experts in English language teaching who present material through video lectures and slide presentations;
- Written texts and glosses to help explain key terms;
- Video clips of actual classroom lessons in which listening is being taught, demonstrating the terms in action.

After that, trainees can experiment with lectures through listening to lectures with and without effective organisation, in order reflect on the importance of delivering lectures from the learner's point of view. Reflection can, after that, be encouraged through, for instance, completing checklist similar to that which is proposed in section 4.3.1.5., in which they evaluate how effective were the lectures they listened to. At this level, discussions can be launched regarding how the lectures' delivery could affect comprehension. Further practice includes the trainees' developing and presenting their own lectures, then, receiving feedback from each other and from the trainer with respect to particular skills.

4.5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, EFL students need to be equipped with the necessary tools that may assist them during lecture listening. This chapter suggested developing metacognition in lecture comprehension through a number of strategy training frameworks (explicit strategy training, awareness training, Chamot *et al.*'s framework), acquainting students with the structure of lectures, in addition to raising their awareness of some strategies which they can have recourse to in an exam. Such proposals can be applied in a modular course in which teachers devote special time and effort.

Meanwhile, the present chapter discussed the various skills that lecturers should have in order to deliver their lectures effectively. The skills enable lecturers to plan, explain, organise information, generate students' motivation, as well as evaluate the lectures. There was also another recommendation regarding visual materials and how they can be employed. Furthermore, some teaching methods were proposed to combine them along with lectures. The main goal is to further facilitate the processing and comprehension of lectures, through providing clear explanations, developing students thinking abilities, guiding them to follow the structure of the lecture, maintaining their attention and motivation.

Finally, considering the aforementioned two challenges– teachers' developing their students' lecture comprehension and lecturers' delivering lectures– the chapter ended with the suggestion that teachers as well as lecturers should be assisted to meet such goals. This could be achieved through providing training, first, to teachers to design strategy instruction and, second, to lecturers to develop the necessary skills and strategies of lecture delivery.

General Conclusion

The primary concern of this research was to uncover the different difficulties and strategies of our EFL first-year LMD students as they tried to comprehend their lectures of linguistics. In addressing this issue the researcher attempted to, first, review the relevant literature that is related to the lectures' structure. In this context, Young's model (1994) of how lectures can be structured into stages (also called strands or phases), was adopted. The stages encompass: content, examples, conclusion, evaluation, and interaction. In order to further make the message well organised some linguistic items are to be used. They are referred to as macro- and micro-organisers. They signal functions like: introducing a topic, moving to a new topic, and summarising.

In order to account for lecture comprehension processes the meaning construction perspective was adopted. It views language comprehension (including reading and listening) as an active process in which comprehenders actively engage in constructing meaning using whatever knowledge available (linguistic or content) in any order or even simultaneously. Within this broad view of comprehension, there are some distinctive features underlying different types of comprehension, like lecture comprehension. This latter is said to comprise processes like: identifying the topic; main ideas; supporting ideas; examples; and the relationship between them, in addition to the ability to recognize key vocabulary.

Nevertheless, some students may not engage in such processes successfully because of a number difficulties; some of which pertain to lack of formal schemata, others to lack of content schemata of the subject matter and the fast speed with which lecturers present the information. In order to overcome such obstacles to effective processing, the chapter cited some lecture comprehension strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. The first type revolves around manipulation of the material (like taking notes and resourcing). The second kind entails planning, monitoring, and evaluating lecture listening (examples encompass comprehension monitoring as well as selective attention). The third category involves interacting with others and manipulating one's affect (for instance, cooperation in addition to lowering anxiety).

Taking into consideration the foregoing review of literature, the researcher undertook a study which sought to uncover our students' difficulties and strategies in understanding lectures of linguistics. Hence, the purpose of chapters two and three was to provide an account of the research instruments used, the teaching/ learning situation in the Section of English, and data analysis. In an attempt to capture the complexity of the situation, a mixed method case study was designed and implemented. It sought to gather and analyse data using qualitative and quantitative paradigms.

Research instrumentation included: questionnaires, tests, and interviews. The questionnaires and the tests were administered to a number of EFL students. They aimed at highlighting their learning experience in listening and lecture comprehension, searching for their difficulties as well as their strategies. The interviews were given to some teachers, and sought to investigate whether and how instructors approached the teaching of listening in general, and lecture comprehension in specific.

The data gathered from the aforementioned research tools were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. They yielded different results. One of the main findings came from the students' report that lack of content schemata related to their lectures was as a major source of difficulty. This problem was reported more frequently than the second obstacle, which is lack of formal schemata about how lectures are generally structured. Furthermore, the students complained about the lecturers' speech rate as being fast. The last difficulty is what they called teacher's method in lecturing, which was suggested to imply that some facilitative strategies were not employed during the lectures of linguistics. Such strategies include: using repetition; detailed explanations; visuals; pauses, structuring the lecture through the necessary organizers to direct learners' attention, building students' content schemata, stimulating students' interest.

With respect to lecture comprehension strategies, the findings of the different statistical measures clearly showed that learners did not have a sound repertoire of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. The claim of some participants that they already possess some lecture comprehension strategies support the idea that EFL learners use strategies in their L1 but imperfectly transfer them into the EFL context (Rost 2005). The results also indicated that the more strategies learners employed the less difficulties they encountered.

As regards the students' performance on the test of lecture comprehension, it was poor. On the one hand, very few students could reach the average and, on the other, many of them could hardly grasp the relationships between the lectures' concepts.

In the light of the foregoing findings, two conclusions were drawn in respect of the relationship between the variables of the present case study:

- first, the more difficulties the students had the lower their comprehension scores were;

- second, as their repertoire of strategies decreased their poor performance on the comprehension test increased.

Therefore, it was clear that the students had difficulties in understanding their lectures and, at the same time, they were not equipped with the necessary strategies which may help them overcome such obstacles to ultimately attain an effective lecture comprehension.

Further findings which emerged from the students' learning experience as well as analysis of the teaching/learning situation in the Section of English− the official programme, the teachers' interviews− revealed that there may be two factors which had brought about learners' difficulties, lack of strategies, and poor performance:

1. listening comprehension along with lecture comprehension were not systematically taught;

2. students may have been taught listening in a traditional way using mainly a product approach, or/and they could have been implicitly instructed some listening strategies (but not lecture comprehension strategies).

As the ultimate goal is to assist our EFL students to effectively process their lectures and overcome any difficulties they may face, chapter four put forward some suggestions. In this context, emphasis was, on the one hand, placed on the importance of teaching students how to listen to their lectures through: developing their metacognition about lecture comprehension as well as expanding their formal schemata about lectures. As far as the former is concerned, some models of learner strategy instruction were reviewed. They concern raising students' awareness about why, how, and when to use a set of lecture comprehension strategies. The purpose is to encourage independent strategy use by helping students take responsibility for the selection and evaluation of the range of lecture comprehension strategies that they were instructed.

In respect of the latter− expanding learners' formal schemata− it is thought to be achieved through teaching students how lectures are generally organized. Hence, a teaching cycle, which is derived from genre-based pedagogy, was suggested. The cycle consists of stages which aim to familiarize learners with the structure of this educational genre.

On the other hand, the focus was also on how lecturers may effectively present their lectures so as to further help learners in lecture comprehension. In this regard, the chapter proposed that lecturers should be able to effectively plan; explain; and organise information, stimulate students' motivation, as well as evaluate their lectures. They also need to provide variety in their classes through the use of visual aids, and some other teaching methods in combination with lectures.

Last but not least, the chapter highlighted the importance of training teachers and lecturers, respectively, into ways of developing learners' metacognition in lecture comprehension and the skills required for presenting lectures. Training, as it was suggested, encompasses theory and practice. In theory, trainees should be presented with theoretical concepts related to metacognition, lectures' structure, and skills for lecturing. Opportunities for practice may include observing experienced teachers and lecturers, developing as well as adapting one's own materials and activities, in addition to receiving and giving feedback on such materials and activities.

Finally, it is hoped that some experimental studies emerge from the present investigation, for the purpose of measuring the degree of the effectiveness of the aforementioned suggestions to ultimately adapt or adopt them effectively in the Section of English. Future experimental research may tackle the following issues: metacognitive instruction and development of lecture comprehension, the use of visual aids− like handouts and podcasts− in lectures, expanding students' formal schemata and comprehension of lectures, note-taking techniques and lecture comprehension. It is also hoped that researchers will try other designs of mixed methods research, employing research instruments that the present case study could not use, such as diary and interviews with learners.

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APPENDICES OF THE STUDY

The Learners' Biodata Questionnaire

We would like to kindly ask you to help us by answering the following questions concerning your experience in listening comprehension in general, and in lectures of linguistics in particular. This is not a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation.

1.How long have you been studying English?

....

2. Under which stream did you study English in the secondary school?

....

3. Were you taught listening comprehension in the middle school?

Yes no

4. Were you taught listening comprehension in the secondary school?

Yes no

5. Have you been taught listening comprehension at university?

Yes no

6. Have you been taught how to listen to lectures?

Yes no

6.1. If yes, state where:

In the secondary school At university

7. Is this the first year that you study linguistics?

Yes No

8. How do you rate your ability to understand lectures of linguistics?

Excellent	very good	good	moderate	not very good
(100%)	(80%)	(50%)	(30%)	(10%)

poor

(4%)

8.1. Explain why

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Thank you very much for your help.

The Learner's Difficulties and Strategy Use Questionnaire

Dear students, we would like to kindly ask you to help us by completing the following questionnaire concerning the difficulties you experienced in your lectures of linguistics, and how you managed to understand such lectures.

<u>Part One</u>: Learner's difficulties

Did you face the following difficulties? Please circle the number that best describes you:

Never: 1 Rarely: 2 Sometimes: 3 Often: 4 Always : 5

a. I faced difficulties to understand because the teachers' speech was fast? **1 2 3 4 5**

b. I faced difficulties to understand because I do not know how the lecture is generally organized? **1 2 3 4 5**

c. I faced difficulties to understand because I did not have enough knowledge concerning new concepts (vocabulary) that I heard during the lecture

1 2 3 4 5

d. If there are any other difficulties mention them

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Part Two: Learners' Strategy Use

Did you do the following things to understand the lectures? Please circle the number that best describes you:

Never:1 Rarely:2 Sometimes:3 Often:4 Always : 5

Section I

a.I tried to evaluate how well I had been in completing the task of listening to and comprehending the lecture

1 2 3 4 5

b. Before listening, I used to think of the objectives of the lecture and the ways which may help me to understand the lecture

1 2 3 4 5

If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 give examples of such objectives and ways

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c. As I listened I related what I heard to what I understood earlier so as to verify, and if necessary, correct my comprehension

1 2 3 4 5

If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 give an example

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d. I paid attention to details **1 2 3 4 5**

e. I concentrated during the lectures **1 2 3 4 5**

f. I was aware of the things that I could not understand
1 2 3 4 5

If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 give an example of such things
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Section II

a. I tried to understand the meaning of words/ sentences I do not know
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If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 mention how
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b. I used to take notes **1 2 3 4 5**

c. I used to make summaries **1 2 3 4 5**

d. I used to read more outside the classroom to better understand the lecture
1 2 3 4 5

e. I used what I already know to predict what the teacher would say
1 2 3 4 5

If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 give an example
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Section III

a. I asked the teacher for much more explanations and rephrasing
1 2 3 4 5

b. I cooperated with my peers **1 2 3 4 5**

c. When I was having troubles understanding I used to say to myself 'I will manage and do fine' **1 2 3 4 5**

d. When I was having troubles understanding I used to say to myself ' it is not possible to understand this'
1 2 3 4 5

e. Before listening, I used to think of something to relax
1 2 3 4 5

If you chose 2 ,or3,or4,or5 give an example of such things

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Other things you usually do

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Thank you

Test 1

1. Which of the following stages can be found in lectures?
   - Theoretical
   - Examples
   - Conclusion
   - Interaction between the teacher and students

2. Explain the stages you chose

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3. How do the stages you chose occur during the lecture?

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4. State some of the words and expressions that lecturers use so as to organize the lecture's ideas and stages
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1 ايمكن العثور على أي من المراحل التالية في المحاضرات؟

نظرية
أمثلة
خاتمة
تفاعل بين المحاضر والطلاب

2 ا شرح مراحل التي اخترتها

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3 اشرح كيف تظهر المراحل اللتي اخترتها في محاضرة

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4 ا ذكر بعض الكلمات والتعبيرات التي تستخدمها المحاضرين وذلك لتنظيم الأفكار المحاضرة والمراحل

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Test 2

In order to carry out an analysis of how language works, linguists have proposed some linguistic levels. But is there a 'best' direction for the study of language using the framework of levels? According to Crystal (1997), it is now recognised that, in any case, it is not possible to carry out an analysis at one level without being aware of other levels. For example, the choice of sounds to describe phonetically depends on awareness of the way sounds distinguish words (i.e., grammar) enabling them to convey differences in meaning (i.e., semantics). In a sense, when we work with levels, we need to move in all directions at once.

Crystal (1997)

Explain the above point of view.

Interview One

How long have you been teaching English?

How long have you been teaching discourse comprehension?

What are the objectives of teaching discourse comprehension within LMD that you focus on?

Do you include listening comprehension? Why?

If you include listening comprehension, then how do you approach the teaching of this skill?

Interview Two

How long have you been teaching English?

How long have you been teaching speaking?

Why do you include listening comprehension in the teaching of oral production?

How do you approach the teaching of listening comprehension in terms of objectives, material, and classroom activities?

APPENDICES OF THE PILOT STUDY

The Learner's Strategy Use and Difficulties Questionnaire

We would like to ask you to help us by completing the following questionnaire concerning how you managed to understand your lectures of linguistics and the difficulties you experienced. This is not a test and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. Thank you very much.

Part One: Which of the following behaviours did you do to understand your lectures? Please circle the number that best describes you

Never:1
Rarely: 2
Sometimes: 3
Often: 4
Always : 5

a. Before listening, I used to think of something funny to relax

1 2 3 4 5

b. Before listening, I used to think of the objectives of the lecture and the ways which may help me to understand the lecture

c. I concentrated during the lectures **1 2 3 4 5**

d. I paid attention to details **1 2 3 4 5**

e. As I listened I related what I heard to what I understood earlier so as to verify, and if necessary, correct my comprehension

f. I was aware of the things that I could not understand

g. I tried to evaluate how well I had been in completing the task of listening to and comprehending the lecture

1 2 3 4 5

h. I tried to understand the meaning of words/ sentences I do not know

1 2 3 4 5

i. I used what I already know to predict what the teacher would say

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

j. I used to take notes **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

k. I used to make summaries **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

l. I used to read more outside the classroom to better understand the lecture

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

m. I asked the teacher for much more explanations and rephrasing

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

n. I cooperated with my peers **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

o. When I was having troubles understanding I used to say to myself 'I will manage and do fine' **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

Part Two

Did you face the following difficulties? Please circle the number thta best describes you:

Never:1

Rarely: 2

Sometimes: 3

Often: 4

Always : 5

a. I faced difficulties to understand because the teachers' speech was fast? **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

b. I faced difficulties to understand because I do not know how the lecture is generally organized? **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

c. I faced difficulties to understand because I did not have enough knowledge concerning new concepts (vocabulary)

1 2 3 4 5

d. State any other difficulties you did not have

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Thank you

Tests of Content Knowledge
Part One

1. Explain Descriptivism and Prescriptivism

Descriptivism…………………………………………………………….
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…………………………………………………………………………
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Prescriptivism…………………………………………………………
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2.Which of those two concepts describes Structuralism?...

3. What is langue according to Saussure?
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…………………………………………………………………………

4. Match the definitions from column A with their corresponding concepts in Column B

A	B
The sound or the graphic sign The concrete object or abstract idea	Signified Signifier

Tests of Content Knowledge
Part Two

1.Explain the difference between a synchronic study and a diachronic study…………………………………………………………………
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2 . What is linguistic competence?
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3. How does performance differ from linguistic competence?
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4. What type of sentences do phrase structure rules generate?
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Tests of Content Knowledge
Part Three

1. What is the task of transformational rules? Explain with an example

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2. What are the types of transformations?

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3. What is the role of morphophonemic rules?

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Résumé en Français:

La présente thèse est une étude sur les difficultés des étudiants quand ils essaient de comprendre leurs conférences de linguistique à la section d'Anglais, de l'université de Tlemcen. Elle tente également de trouver les stratégies utilisées pour surmonter ces obstacles. L'objectif est de proposer des moyens pour aider les étudiants à comprendre efficacement leurs conférences.

Mots clés : conférences, linguistique, compréhension, étudiants.

Summary in English:

The present thesis revolves around a case study about the difficulties that EFL students face when trying to understand their lectures of linguistics at the English section, Tlemcen University. It also attempts at assessing the strategies used to overcome such obstacles. The aim is to suggest ways to help students effectively process their lectures.

Key words: lectures, comprehension, linguistics, students.

ملخص:

تدور هذه الرسالة حول دراسة حالة عن صعوبات الطلاب عند محاولة فهم محاضراتهم في اللسانيات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة تلمسان. وهي تحاول أيضا ايجاد الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة للتغلب على تلك العقبات. والهدف من ذلك هو اقتراح سبل لمساعدة الطلاب في الفهم على نحو فعال محاضراتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

محاضرات، فهم، اللسانيات، الطلاب.

Summary of the Thesis

The present work revolves around an assessment of EFL students' difficulties and strategy use when processing lectures of linguistics, at the section of English in Tlemcen University. It is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a review of literature which is found relevant to the case study. The second chapter describes the teaching/learning situation of where the study was undertaken and research instruments in depth. Third chapter analyses the data qualitatively and quantitatively. The final chapter is devoted to some pedagogical suggestions. The research question guiding this case study is: What are our first-year EFL students' difficulties and strategies in comprehending their lectures of linguistics within the LMD system?

In trying to answer the foregoing research question, the researcher first attempted to draw on some theoretical stances in the field of lecture comprehension so as to address the concern of the empirical study, which is investigating learners' difficulties and strategies in lecture listening. Thus, the first chapter is devoted to two main issues: the lectures' structure and comprehension processes. At far as the first issue is concerned, there may be a number of points which are worth raising. First, lectures can be defined either as an academic spoken genre from the ESP point of view, or as an educational genre from a systemic functional linguistic perspective. The second view is rather adopted for reasons of feasibility of research. Second, being an educational genre, lectures' main purpose is to transmit information in a way that facilitates comprehension. Third, this genre may be analysed in terms of register configuration and schematic structure. The former involves field– the activity, tenor– the participants, and mode– the channel of communication. The latter entails the presence of interweaving phases which do not occur in any particular order and can re-appear throughout the lecture. Information in lectures is organized through some macro- and micro-organizers.

As for the second issue -comprehension processes, the main points that have been raised revolve around the nature of comprehension in general, then listening, and finally lecture comprehension. The first form of comprehension, as it is suggested, involves a process of meaning construction in which different types of knowledge are used: linguistic and schematic. Listening comprehension differs from reading comprehension in the nature of the input which is spoken. However, listening comprehension itself may differ according to the purpose of listening, hence, one may identify types of listening comprehension, including lecture comprehension. Within this latter, EFL learners may face a number of difficulties, some of them are related to their formal and content schemata, and the lecturer's speech rate.

In order to get over such barriers, the chapter suggests a range of strategies-metacognitive, cognitive, socioaffective. The first category involves planning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating one's own listening (Examples include: selective attention, comprehension monitoring, advance organisation, problem identification). Cognitive strategies revolve around direct manipulation of the learning material. They encompass strategies like inferencing, note-taking, elaboration, resourcing. Socioaffective strategies include interacting with others to assist learning, such as questioning for clarification, and using affective control like lowering anxiety.

The second chapter has so far revolved around describing the case study in terms of where it took place, the participants, the research instruments and procedures. As far as the first point is concerned, the researcher undertook the study in the Section of English at Abou Bekr Belkaid University. The official programme of this section did not recognise listening comprehension as a modular course, but it included it within the module of discourse comprehension. Among the issues that the analysis of the lessons and materials of discourse comprehension revealed were: neither listening comprehension was instructed systematically, nor was lecture comprehension taught.

In respect of the subjects, the sample comprised some First-year LMD students in addition to some of their teachers. The researcher set out to investigate the students' learning experience, difficulties and strategies in understanding lectures of linguistics. The teachers were instructors of speaking and discourse comprehension, whose participation in the study was meant to provide more information about the status of listening comprehension in LMD, at the Section of English.

As for the research instruments, the researcher employed different data collection measures. While two questionnaires and two tests were administered to the students, two semi-structured interviews were administered to the teachers.

Finally, the end of this chapter is a detailed account of the procedures of the research methods. The first procedure was to explain the study and its purposes to the participants. Then, the researcher took an oral consent from them. After that, the research instruments were given to the participants. The aforementioned research tools and procedures underwent a pilot testing. This latter was the main concern of the last section in this chapter. For more information concerning the data gathered during the case study, the reader can have recourse to the next chapter.

The main purpose of chapter three has been to analyse and discuss the data which were obtained from the different research instruments. These latter involved interviews for teachers, in addition to tests and questionnaires for students. The researcher engaged in the analysis via some quantitative statistical measures (like: frequencies, percentages, mean), and qualitative interpretations.

The main finding of teachers' interviews showed that listening comprehension was not systematically practised at the Section of English. The research tools administered to students yielded various results. First, based on what was reported concerning their learning experience, learners were not instructed into how to listen to lectures. Secondly, they faced many difficulties in understanding their lectures, namely lack of content schemata, lack of formal schemata, lecturer's fast rate of speech, in addition to teacher' s way of giving lectures. This latter, as it was interpreted, may imply that lecturers did not engage in effective strategies of delivering lectures, like repetition; pausing; visual supports; motivating learners; presenting the lecture in a well-organized way.

At the same time, learners did not have a sound repertoire of lecture comprehension strategies to help them overcome such barriers. They seemed to be lacking some metacognitive strategies, in addition to their inappropriate use of the range of the strategies they already possess. As corollary to these findings, the participants could not successfully comprehend their lectures of linguistics. Finally, the chapter also suggested that motivation seems to play an important role, for students who were more strategic noted that they were also motivated.

In the light of the results, the hypothesis of each research question will be either confirmed or rejected.

1. *Research question one: what is the status of listening comprehension within LMD*? The hypothesis of this question is: *the skill of*

listening comprehension might officially be included in the curriculum of LMD, but may not be systematically developed in practice.

Analysis of the teachers' interviews revealed three important points: first, listening was used as a means to other ends rather than an end in itself, second, teachers did not use appropriate methodology of teaching listening− either a product approach or an implicit strategy instruction and, third, listening materials were confined to two types: face to face listening and listening for pleasure. This is in contrast to recent views in the literature on teaching listening which indicate greater interests in raising listeners' awareness of the process, and which also stress the use of different listening text-types. This situation, in the English language section, may confirm Bouhadiba's view that the Algerian teacher seems to be lacking qualified ELT professionalism. Therefore, one may accept the hypothesis related to this research question.

2. *Research question two*: *What is our EFL learners' experience in listening comprehension in general, and lecture comprehension in specific*? The hypothesis is: *throughout their learning experience, our EFL learners may have been exposed to listening, but they may not have been taught how to manage to understand university lectures.*

For this research question, a biodata questionnaire was used. The findings indicated that some students were taught listening comprehension in the middle schools, secondary schools, and at university. However, the subjects were not instructed into lecture comprehension and, hence, they reported that it was difficult for them to understand their linguistics lectures. This may also lend support to Bouhadiba's opinion of the Algerian teacher. Teachers do not seem to respond to students' needs to comprehend lectures, though this educational genre is widely used at university. As a result, one may confirm the hypothesis of this second question.

3. *Research question three: What might be the students' difficulties in understanding their lectures of linguistics*? The hypothesis is: *Among the difficulties that our EFL learners may have are those related to the speed of delivery of lectures, lack of forma and content knowledge.*

Findings for this question were collected using a questionnaire and a test. Such findings confirmed the hypothesis as they revealed that the students faced barriers pertaining to: lack of content schemata; lack of formal schemata; lecturer's fast rate of speech. Another difficulty that was mentioned is teacher's method. In this context, the researcher proposed different interpretations. Firstly, the lecture was not delivered appropriately through organizing it into different stages using the necessary lexical phrases, which made it difficult to learners to comprehend such lectures. Additionally, there was lack or absence of some facilitative strategies which may be useful to learners, as repetition; pauses; and visual aids. Secondly, the students themselves were not aware of the lecture's structure and the different lexical phrases even if the lecturer used the phrases, which made the processing of the lectures difficult.

4. *Research question four: Do the students have the necessary strategies which assist them in comprehending their lectures of linguistics*? The hypothesis is: *our EFL learners may not have a sound repertoire of strategies to comprehend their lectures of linguistics.*

A questionnaire was used to uncover the students' lecture comprehension strategies. The results clearly showed that the learners did not have a sound repertoire of this type of strategies, which clearly lends support to the hypothesis. Furthermore, a negative correlation was found between the participants' lecture comprehension strategies and difficulties: as they did not possess the necessary strategies, their difficulties to understand their lectures increased.

5. *Research question five*: *Do the students successfully attain comprehension of linguistics lectures*? The hypothesis is: *our EFL learners may display poor understanding of their lectures of linguistics.*

The students' scores in test 2 were very low, which suggests that the participants could not understand their lectures of linguistics, and which, thus, further reinforces the hypothesis. The researcher also suggested the following conclusion: since these subjects faced difficulties which they could not overcome– for they did not have the necessary strategies– their performance revealed poor comprehension of the linguistics lectures.

After diagnosing this lecture listening situation, the following step is to provide some suggestions as to how teachers and lecturers may effectively address their students' needs to cope with the task of lecture comprehension. This will be the main concern of chapter four.

As one of the main implications drawn frim chapter three is that EFL students need to be equipped with the necessary tools that may assist them during lecture listening. Thus, the third chapter suggested developing metacognition in lecture comprehension through a number of strategy training frameworks: explicit strategy training, awareness training, Chamot *et al.*'s framework (which involves four stages– planning, monitoring, problem-solving, evaluation), acquainting students with the structure of lectures, in addition to raising their awareness of some strategies which they can have recourse to in an exam.

Such proposals can be applied in a modular course in which teachers devote special time and effort. Meanwhile, the chapter discussed the various skills that lecturers should have in order to deliver their lectures effectively. The skills enable lecturers to plan, explain, organise information, generate students' motivation, as well as evaluate the lectures. Characteristics of effective lecturers entail: clarity of presentation, scholarship, and willingness to develop students. Clarity of presentation means that the lecturer should be able to: present materials clearly and logically, enable students to understand the basic principles of the subject, be clearly heard, make material intelligibly meaningful, and maintain continuity in the course. The criterion of scholarship requires the lecturer to: show an expert knowledge of subject; illustrate practical applications of the theory of subject; refer to latest developments in the subject; make links between theory and practice. Finally, willingness to develop students entails that the lecturer should: readily consider students' viewpoints; allow questions during lectures; stimulate students to think independently and critically.

There was also another recommendation regarding multimodal dimension, namely, visual materials and how they can be employed. The multimodal dimension refers to characteristics which combine and integrate the meaning-making resources of more than one semiotic modality– for example language, gesture, movement, visual images ... The visual mode of communication encompasses graphics, diagrams, tables, texts, and can be delivered through a number of visual aids, such as whiteboard, overhead projection slides, PowerPoint, handouts, and podcasts. Advantages of the visual mode include: Enhancing comprehension of a complicated idea or process;

- Maintaining learners' attention;
- Assisting students' memory, as learners may remember a visual explanation easily than words;
- Creating a relaxing environment.

Furthermore, some teaching methods were proposed to combine them along with lectures, students' such as buzz groups and horseshoe groups, case-study method, short talks. The main goal is to further facilitate the processing and comprehension of lectures, through providing clear explanations, developing students thinking abilities, guiding them to follow the structure of the lecture, maintaining their attention and motivation.

Finally, considering the aforementioned two challenges– teachers' developing their students' lecture comprehension and lecturers' delivering lectures– the chapter ended with the suggestion that teachers as well as lecturers should be assisted to meet such goals. This could be achieved through providing training, first, to teachers to design strategy instruction and, second, to lecturers to develop the necessary skills and strategies of lecture delivery.

The training design can be based on theory and practice. For learning strategy instruction, the programmes may include different methods of instruction, like: lectures, outside reading of journal articles and book excerpts describing learning/teaching experiences and issues, pair and small-group discussions, strategy activities, observation of classes instructed by experienced teachers who have already incorporated, interactive sessions for practising and developing lesson or lecture plans.

As with any case study, this investigation has some limitations since there were some problems that the researcher encountered. Although limitations may be inevitable, the researcher should try to deal with them when designing the study, through setting some delimitations. One of the limitations is that non-random sampling was used in selecting the students, mainly because of time constraints related to the students' hectic schedule and the timetable of the researcher, which could not allow her to use a random sampling technique and meet a large number of students, at different occasions so as to administer the different research instruments. Consequently, the researcher had to choose another type of sample: convenience sampling, which does not ensure representativeness and, thus, generalisability. In order to overcome this limitation, Mackey and Gass (2005) suggested that the researcher should thoroughly describe the sample so that others can judge to whom and in what circumstances the results may be meaningful and generalized. For the present case study, the biodata questionnaire was used to provide enough details about the students.

Time limitation was also the main reason why the questionnaire was the only research tool used to uncover the students' lecture comprehension strategies. As the researcher faced difficulties to have access to the students, she could not use the interview as a type of verbal report that might have yielded rich qualitative information about how strategies were employed by the students. In an attempt to compensate for this lack of qualitative information, the researcher chose to:

a. add some open ended items;

b. provide further interpretations of the results through reporting some studies about lecture comprehension in other contexts. However, it is worth mentioning at this level that one should be cautious to confirm that such interpretations are entirely applicable to the present case study. A second way to provide explanations for the quantitative findings was the use of the biodata questionnaire which aimed at highlighting the students' learning experience.

Finally, the researcher sought to set a comparison between LMD and the previous system with respect to the status of listening comprehension in general, and lecture comprehension in particular. Therefore, she designed interviews for teachers who instructed speaking and reading in both educational systems. However, she could not find a sample of teachers for this purpose, which pushed her to make a comparison with reference to the programmes of both modular courses within the two educational systems.

Finally, it is hoped that acknowledgment of the above limitations will contribute to improvement of future research in this field.

Anissa Khaldi. (2013). Listening to Academic Lectures: Investigating Students' Strategies and Comprehension. *English for Specific Purposes World*, *14*(39).

Listening to Academic Lectures: Investigating Students' Strategies and Comprehension

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Abstract

Listening is a very important vehicle for language learning. At university, this skill is attached more importance as it is also used to accumulate content information from lectures. The present case study focuses on academic lecture comprehension. It attempts to investigate whether EFL first-year students at Tlemcen University (Algeria) have the necessary strategies which help them comprehend their lectures. For this purpose, a questionnaire is administered to uncover the strategies of the participants, in addition to a test to measure their comprehension of lectures. The results show that the subjects do not employ the necessary strategies, and their performance on the test is poor. Therefore, it is suggested, at the end of the article, that university students should be instructed into lecture comprehension strategies so as to assist them to effectively understand their academic lectures.

Key words: Academic, Listening, Lectures, Strategies, EFL, Learners

Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of listening comprehension in language learning. This may be reflected in the increased publication of articles and books which revolve around different aspects of listening, such as listening processes (e.g., Richards, 1983; Weir, 1993), listening strategies (e.g., Vandergrift, 1996; Goh, 1997, 2000, 2002), the effect of speech rates (e.g., Griffiths, 1990; Tauroza & Allison, 1990). As most university instruction takes place through the medium of lectures, the ability to comprehend academic lectures has also received some attention. In this context, one major issue which has been addressed is the use of strategies.

Academic Lecture Comprehension Strategies

Listening comprehension varies according to whether listeners are involved in listening as a component of social action (conversational listening) with the purpose being understanding a speaker's personal interests and developing social relationships; or listening for pleasure (for example: listening to movies, radio); or listening in order to learn which includes listening to academic lectures (Richards, 1983).

For each type of listening comprehension different processes are required. With respect to lecture comprehension, Richards (1983) suggested a number of processes, including: the ability to understand the purpose of the lecture; the ability to identify the topic of the lecture and follow topic development; the ability to recognize major relationships between units of the lecture (major ideas, supporting ideas, examples); the ability to identify cues that signal the structure of lectures; the ability to recognize key lexical items related to the subject/ topic; the ability to deduce meanings from words based on the context; the ability to infer relationships, for example, cause, effect, etc; the ability to follow information from lecturer's speech (spoken language) and information derived from other media, like visually displayed materials presented by the overhead projector.

In order to facilitate the processing of academic lectures, students can employ a range of strategies. Strategies are "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:1). Flowerdew and Miller (2005) proposed a list of lecture comprehension strategies which are outlined in table 1. Three kinds of strategies are identified: metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective. The first category involves thinking about the listening process, planning for listening, monitoring listening whilst taking place, and self-evaluation after the task has been completed. Cognitive strategies entail manipulating the listening material or applying specific techniques to a listening task. Socio-affective strategies describe the techniques that the listener uses for: interacting with others (teachers and peers) to verify comprehension, lowering anxiety, and self-encouragement.

Strategy	Description
Metacognitive Advance organization	Clarifying the objectives of the lecture listening and /or proposing strategies for handling it
Directed attention	attending to the main points of the lecture ignoring irrelevant distractions; maintaining attention while listening
Selective attention	paying attention to details
Comprehension monitoring	Checking one's understanding
Problem identification	Deciding what problems hinder comprehension;
Evaluation	Judging overall execution of the task and of one's strategy use
Cognitive Inferencing	Using information within the spoken message to guess the meaning of unfamiliar language items, predict outcomes or fill in information
Elaboration	Using content and formal schemata already stored in memory to predict outcomes or fill in missing information
Note taking	Writing notes during the lecture listening
Summarization	Making a summary
Resourcing	Using available reference resources of information, like books, articles
Socioaffective Questioning for clarification	Asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing
Cooperation	Learners working together
Lowering anxiety	Trying to relax
Self-encouragement	Positive self-talk(I can do it)

<u>Table 1.</u> Lecture Comprehension Strategies

(adapted from Flowerdew and Miller, 2005)

Research Questions

The present case study tries to answer two general research questions:

1. Do students possess the strategies which help them understand their academic lectures? Three other sub-questions are generated:
   - Do students employ cognitive strategies to process their academic lectures?
   - Do students use metacognitive strategies to understand their academic lectures?
   - Do students employ socio-affective strategies to comprehend their academic lectures?
2. To what extent do students succeed in comprehending their academic lectures?

Methodology

The subjects participating in this case study were first-year EFL students studying English at the English Section, in Tlemcen University (Algeria). Their learning experience of English ranged from seven to eight years. At university, they are supposed to study three years to have a BA, which will enable them to work as teachers. Most of the modules studied are based on lectures.

A questionnaire was developed based on Flowerdew and Miller's taxnonomy of lecture comprehension strategies (2005). It was given to the participants so as to uncover their strategies. The items of the questionnaire were in the form of frequency rating scales. Each item asked about how often the participant would employ a particular strategy. The points in the scale ranged from never to always. In order to measure their ability to comprehend lectures, the participants were to sit on a test.

Analysis

After collecting data, the researcher analysed the results through calculating the central tendency. The total score for research each research instrument was decided to be twenty. As far as the questionnaire is concerned, the mean of the group was found to be low: 6.78 out of twenty. For the overwhelming majority (85.71%), the mean scores of strategy use ranged from one to eight out of twenty. The percentage of students who reported mean scores of strategy use around 11 was 9.52%. Finally, 4.77% had a mean of 10. Other elements of the central tendency of the group are reported in following table.

Mode	**Median**	**SD**
4.67	6.67	2.53

Table 2. The Participants' Mode, Median, and SD of Strategy Use

The mean scores of the different types of lecture comprehension strategies, namely metacognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; and socio-affective strategies were 2.84; 2.29; 1.65, respectively. The findings also showed that the subjects appeared to use less the strategies that require interaction with their peers and the lecturer. This finding is similar to Jeon' results (2007) in his investigation of lecture comprehension strategies. The reason that this researcher stated was the students' concern of losing face.

The strategy that was reported less by the group was inferencing. The highest mean values were related to the strategies: directed attention, selective attention, and note-taking. The low mean value of inferencing may be due to the subjects' lack of background knowledge. If listeners have no knowledge relevant to the particular event taking place, then it will be more difficult for them to make inferences (Buck, 2001). In this study, the mean of this type of knowledge was also low. Hence, the participants seemed to have poor background knowledge that could have assisted them to make inferences. A possible explanation for the quantitative high mean values of the other strategies is that note-taking requires, partly, concentration and selective attention of important details (Piolat et al., 2005).

Regarding the test of lecture comprehension, the findings are displayed in the following table.

Mean	**Mode**	**Median**	**SD**
5	4.25	4.5	2.35

Table 3. Central Tendency of the Test

As it can be concluded from the above table, the group had a very poor performance. The mean was very low. The most frequently occurring score was 4.25. The sample demonstrated heterogeneity. In this context, the best score was 10 and the lowest was 1. Therefore, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of students could not comprehend their lectures.

Analysis of the test also showed that some subjects succeeded, to some extent, in defining some concepts but they could not understand the relations between such concepts. This failure may be due to two factors. First, some participants' proficiency could probably help them to recall information as presented in the lectures, however their lack of content knowledge hindered them from integrating the information from the different parts of the lectures. In this line of thought, Jeon (2007) argued that learner's proficiency may help the student achieve only a superficial understanding of the lectures which is sufficient for retention tasks but not for tasks of reconstructing information to infer relationships. This second type of tasks requires the use of content knowledge. Another reason for subjects' inability to grasp the relationships between the concepts of lectures may be the fact that lecturers did not include detailed explanations.

Summary of the Results

To sum up, the findings of the questionnaire clearly imply that the group had some lecture comprehension strategies. This supports the common view in the literature that EFL learners usually have some language learning strategies. They often employ them in their mother tongue, and transfer some of them to foreign language learning (Mendelsohn, 1994). However, the results of the statistical measures also indicated that the subjects possessed a few number of lecture comprehension strategies. This may be due to the fact that L1 listening comprehension strategies might have been impartially or imperfectly transferred to EFL learning (Rost, 2005). Finally, as the participants did not have all the necessary strategies, they failed to successfully comprehend their academic lectures. This was clearly evident in results of the test of lecture comprehension.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the aforementioned findings, is it suggested that university students should be assisted to process their academic lectures effectively. This can be done through instructing them into lecture comprehension strategies. Although various models of strategy instruction have been proposed, many researchers pointed out to the value of explicit strategy training (Graham, 1997). The main purpose is to make students aware of what, when, and how to use specific strategies. Therefore, listeners will ultimately learn to take charge of the comprehension process and become more autonomous.

Explicit strategy training comprises the following stages:

1. Preparation and assessment: this stage concerns identifying the strategies that students already use, in order to decide which strategies to instruct and which ones should be given more attention;
2. Presentation/modelling: the instructor describes and demonstrates the use of the strategy in question;
3. Practice: learners are given various opportunities to practice the strategy;
4. Evaluation: learners are encouraged to assess the efficacy of the strategy.

In order to further help students develop autonomy in consciously focusing on the strategies, teachers can develop a checklist (Vandergrift, 1999), which should comprise the different lecture comprehension strategies that students need to employ. Before lecture listening, students may have recourse to the checklist to guide them in preparing themselves. After the task of lecture comprehension, students should check whether they considered using the necessary strategies.

Conclusion

The main conclusion which can be drawn from the data of this case study is that students did not have the necessary lecture comprehension strategies which could assist them to process their lectures effectively. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to instruct their students into how to listen to their lectures. This could be done through explicit strategy training of lecture comprehension strategies, which will develop students' responsibility to take charge of learning and achieve a better understanding of lectures.

Finally, it may be worth mentioning that one limitation of this study is that it did not examine differences between skilled listeners and less skilled ones. Hence, future research may explore the qualitative differences of strategy use between both types of listeners after conducting explicit strategy training in lecture comprehension.

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