



**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING
COMPREHENSION: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY AT ENGLISH
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT FBS UNP**

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Abstract

This research was aimed to find out the difficulties that mostly faced by students in listening comprehension and the factors which cause the difficulties at English language and literature department FBS UNP. This study employed descriptive qualitative research method. The subjects of this research were K-2 Class which consists of 32 students selected by using cluster sampling technique. The data was collected from questionnaire and interview. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to all members of the class. After that, the researcher chose six students to be interviewed. The results of this study showed that the difficulties that the students faced in listening comprehension were related into three categories, they were the listening material, the listener, and the physical setting. Besides, the factors which cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension were depend on others, shame to ask the lecturer about the material, having emotional disturbances, the lecturer explains the material too quickly, lack of reward and reinforcement, and unfocused.

Keywords: listening comprehension, listening difficulties.

A. INTRODUCTION

Listening as a foreign language is an essential part of English. It seems like other skills like writing, learning, and speaking, listening is very important because it is the most commonly used skill in everyday life. Even, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) explained that listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. Learning listening will allow us to greatly improve the ability to communicate. People need to regularly and consistently hear different forms of English if they want to communicate properly and meaningfully. It means that people cannot learn language without hearing because listening provides language input. Similarly, Hien (2015) states listening as foreign language learning is important since it presents the language input. As an input skill, listening plays the important roles in students' language development. Furthermore, listening has the

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potential to develop students' pronunciation, words stress, and syntax acquisitions. It also contributes for language expertise and proficiency.

Comprehension is needed in listening, it is mean a process that want to measure about how the meaning will be understanding. Thus, listening comprehension is a complex process to identify and to understand dialog and monolog what the speaker said which used audio cassette or watched VCD in English listening. Listening English comprehension is completely different from usual listening activities because English is not our mother tongue language and there are sounds which are hard to understand because the speaker use particular accents and unfamiliar for the students that makes them fail to understand what the speaker says. Because of that, it is very important to find out the students' difficulties in listening comprehension in order to make the students succeed in listening comprehension.

Related to this research, there was a prior study which is quite similar to this research. The research was conducted by Hamouda (2013) who analyze investigation of listening comprehension problems encountered by Saudi students in the EL listening classroom. The results of the study showed that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners. Moreover, Trisno, Emzir, and Mayuni (2019) have done research about students' problem in listening comprehension at university level. This study aims to identify problems faced by students in listening skill at the English Department at the university level. The data of this study were obtained from students of the English Department of FBS, State University of Padang.

Based on the previous studies, it can be concluded that those studies focused on listening comprehension problems. Those studies are quite similar with this research, but focused on the listening comprehension problems only. Meanwhile, this research not only focuses on the problems, but also on factors causing the problems in listening comprehension.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research. According to Selinger and Shohamy (1989: 117), "descriptive qualitative research is a type of research refers to investigation, which utilizes already existing data or an experimental research." The population of this research were the second year English Department students of Universitas Negeri Padang, and the sample was the K-2 class which consists of 32 students. The instruments used to collect the data in this research were questionnaire sheet and interview guideline. The questionnaire consists of three sections. First section was asked about listening material consists of 10 questions, second section about the listener consists of 15 questions, and the third section is about speaker and physical setting consists of 10 questions. Those sections were used in order to answer the research question number 1. Meanwhile, in order to answer the research question number 2, the researcher was given the respondents other questionnaire that consists of 18

questions. For the interview it only consists of 5 questions. In order to analyse the data the researcher used the theory from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

A. Data Analysis from Questionnaires

There were two questionnaires that given to the students. The first questionnaire consists of three sections. First section was asked about listening material consists of 10 questions, second section about the listener consists of 15 questions, and the third section is about speaker and physical setting consists of 10 questions. Those sections were used in order to answer the research question number 1. Meanwhile, in order to answer the research question number 2, the researcher was given the students the second questionnaire that consists of 18 questions.

1. Questionnaire 1

a. Students' difficulties related to listening material

To know the result of students' difficulties in listening material, the researcher used the following table which consisted of the students' answer of the question.

Table 1: Students' difficulties related to listening material

No	Questions	Answer (Yes) %	Answer (No) %
1.	Do you understand listening text in which there are too many unfamiliar words including jargons and idioms?	40.6	59.4
2.	Do listening comprehension have complex grammatical structures?	62.5	37.5
3.	Do you find difficult to understand every single word of incoming speech?	65.6	34.4
4.	When spoken text too long, does interfere your listening comprehension?	78	22
5.	Do you find difficult to interpret the meaning of a long spoken text?	72	28
6.	Do you feel fatigue and distracted when you listen a long spoken text?	75	25
7.	Do you find difficult to understand listening text when the topic is unfamiliar?	81	19
8.	Do you find difficult to understand reduced form?	50	50
9.	Do you find difficult to understand long conversation?	72	28
10.	Do you use your own personal experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text?	87.5	12.5

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that most of the students found several difficulties related to the listening material in listening comprehension. The first difficulty is complex grammatical structures. Most of the students did not mastered grammar because they thought it was really hard to do. As well in listening, students found difficult in listening because listening text has complex grammatical structures and they did not understand about it.

The second difficulty is difficult to understand every single words of incoming speech. Most of the students found difficult in listening because they hard to understand every single words of incoming speech. It means that they did not mastered vocabulary. So that when they listen to every word from the speaker, they found difficult because not all the words they know it means. When they found an unknown word, they could not stop and think about it because if they do that they will miss the next words. Besides, the audio only played once.

The third difficulty is difficult to inter the meaning of long spoken text. Almost all of the students found difficult in interpret the meaning of long spoken text. It might be because they did not master vocabulary. So that when they listen to a long spoken text they will get lazy to hear about it. Sometimes, they also get sleepy when listen to a long spoken text.

The fourth difficulty is unfamiliar topic. Many students found difficult in understanding what the speaker said because the topic is unfamiliar for them. They found difficult in unfamiliar topic because it consists of words that they did not know the meaning. So that it is really important for students to read a lot so they can have extensive knowledge.

b. Students' difficulties related to the listener

In the second section, the students were asked about the difficulties that they faced in listening comprehension related to their selves as the listener. For more details, it can be seen on the table below:

Table 2: Students' difficulties related to the listener

No	Questions	Answer (Yes) %	Answer (No) %
1.	Before doing listening comprehension, Do you fear you cannot understand what you will hear?	53	47
2.	Do you feel worried if you don't understand spoken text?	59	41
3.	Do you find the pronunciation familiar but you cannot recognize the word?	69	31
4.	Do you pay attention with intonation of the speakers?	69	31
5.	Do you find difficult to recognize the signals which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another?	47	53

6.	Do you lose focus when got an expected answer in your mind?	66	34
7.	When encountering an unknown word, I stop listening and think about the meaning of the word?	41	59
8.	It is difficult to infer the meaning unknown word while listening?	87.5	12.5
9.	When you search answer and listen dialogue at the same time, do you unable to concentrate?	72	28
10.	Do you lose concentration when you think the meaning of new words?	66	34
11.	Do you find difficult to recognize the word that you know because the way speaker pronounced?	75	25
12.	Do you difficult to predict what would come next?	47	53
13.	Do you difficult to quickly remember word or phrase you have just heard?	56	44
14.	Do you difficult to answer question which require other than short answer?	47	53
15.	Do you find difficult when listening without transcript?	53	47

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that students found several difficulties related to their selves as the listener in listening comprehension. The first difficulty is anxiety. Most of the students have anxiety before they listen to the audio. When they get anxiety, they will lose focus and cannot listen to the audio clearly. That is why the lecturer must create a fun classroom situation and make students feel relax and comfortable. The second difficulty is difficult to infer the meaning of unknown words. Most of the students cannot infer the meaning of unknown words because when they found unknown words they just keep listening and never think about the meaning. It is really important for the students to infer the meaning of unknown words, because the audio only played once.

The third difficulty is unable to concentrate. Most of the students answered that they unable to concentrate in listening comprehension. This problem might be happen because there were noises around. The noises could come from outside or inside the classroom. If the students did not concentrate in listening, they will not be able to answer the questions. The fourth difficulty is unclear pronunciation. Most of the speakers have different way in pronounced the words. They pronounce it different might be because they have different accents or dialects. Because of that the students must practice to listen to a variety of different accents and dialects.

The fifth difficulty is hard to remember. Many students found difficult in listening comprehension because they hard to remember. It means that they

quickly forgot what they have just heard. Remembering is really important in listening. It is because the audio only played once, so the students have to be able remembering what the speaker has just said.

c. Students' difficulties related to speaker and physical setting

In the last section, the students were asked about the difficulties that the students' faced in listening comprehension related to the speaker and physical setting. The result can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: Students' difficulties related to speaker and physical setting

No	Questions	Answer (Yes) %	Answer (No) %
1.	Do you lose concentration if the recording a poor quality?	90.6	9.4
2.	Do you find difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses?	65.6	34.4
3.	Do you find difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken without seeing the speaker's body language?	34.4	65.6
4.	Do you find difficult to understand well when the speaker in a variety accents?	84.4	15.6
5.	Do you find difficult to understand when the speaker speak too fast?	87.5	12.5
6.	Do you find difficult to understand when the speaker does not pause long enough?	81.3	18.7
7.	Do you find difficult if unable to get repeated?	75	25
8.	Do you find difficult to concentrate if noises around?	90.6	9.4
9.	When unclear resulting from a poor quality CD player. Does interfere your listening?	81.3	18.7
10.	If unclear sounds resulting from poor equipment. Does interfere your listening comprehension?	84.4	15.6

As can be seen, the students found some difficulties in listening comprehension related to the speaker and physical setting. The first difficulty is poor quality of tapes or disks greatly affects students in listening to the audio. It was because poor quality of tapes or disks will produce unclear sounds and the students will not understand because they cannot hear it clearly. Therefore, the quality of tapes or disks must be highly considered by the lecturer.

The second difficulty is poor equipment. Besides the quality of tapes and disks, the lecturer also has to pay attention to the equipment used during the learning process of listening. Equipment here for example, sounds system, headphone,

microphone and others. If one of those equipments did not function properly, the students will be difficult to understand what the speaker said. The third difficulty is lack of pauses. Most of the students cannot infer the meaning of the words because the speaker speaks with lack of pauses. The speaker just keeps talking with lack of pauses and the students cannot get the meaning. Because of that the students must listen carefully to the speaker.

The fourth difficulty is inability to get repeated. Besides lack of pauses, the audio also cannot be repeated. It was because it played only once and will not be repeated. The students must do more exercises, so that they can understand what the speaker said by listening once. The fifth difficulty is noises. Noises were really disturbing students in learning listening. It was because listening requires high concentration. However, if there were noises, the students will not be able to concentrate and cannot listen carefully. That is why the classroom must be soundproof so that noises from outside does not disturb the students.

The sixth difficulty is variety of accents. Most of the students found difficult in listening because they did not understand the accents of the speaker. Most of the students are accustomed to listen to American accents, so when they listen to the speaker with Indian accents they found difficult and did not understand what the speaker said. The last difficulty is speed of delivery. Speed of delivery here means the speaker sometimes speaks too fast. There were no pauses when the speaker speaks and the student unable to get the meaning of the words. Moreover, the audio played only once, and it will be more difficult for the students.

2. Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire was asked to know about the factors that cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension. There were 18 questions given to the students. For more details it can be seen on the table below.

Table 4: Factors that cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension

No	Questions	Answer (Yes) %	Answer (No) %
1.	Do you have hearing problem?	25	75
2.	Do you have low intelligence or learning disability in understanding the material?	28	72
3.	Do you have low motivation or spirit in studying listening?	40.6	59.4
4.	Can you concentrate when listening to the listening material?	90.6	9.4
5.	Do you have wrong habits in study the listening material? (cheating or waiting for an answer from friend)	31.3	68.7
6.	Do you depend on others when you find something you do not understand?	53	47
7.	Do you feel shame to ask if there is material that is unclear?	69	31

8.	Do you feel confident in what you do?	69	31
9.	Do you have emotional disturbances like moody, irritable, angry, or unhappy in learning listening comprehension?	56	44
10.	Do you think the lecturers have used attractive teaching methods and techniques?	65.6	34.4
11.	Do the media and tools used during listening often have problems?	34.4	65.6
12.	Are the tools and resources for learning activities adequate?	72	28
13.	Are the laboratory situations conducive to learn listening?	84.4	15.6
14.	Do the lecturers explain the orders or instructions of the material clearly?	78	22
15.	Do the lecturers explain the learning materials too quickly?	56	44
16.	Do the situations or teaching learning processes stimulate you to be active?	84	16
17.	Do you have interaction with the lecturer in the learning process?	93.7	6.3
18.	Do the lecturers often give reward or reinforcement during the learning process?	37.5	62.5

From the table above it can be concluded that student found difficulties in listening comprehension because of several factors. The first factor is depend on others. Depend on others here means that students always dependent on other students. When they found material that they did not understand when learning listening, they always ask their friends. They never tried to find the answer by themselves. Because they were always dependent on others, they will never understand about the material and they were never learned from their mistakes.

The second factor is shame to ask the lecturer about the material. Most of the students prefer asking about the material that they did not understand to their friend than to the lecturer. It was because they felt shame to ask the lecturer. Might be they were afraid that the lecturer will scold them. When they ask their friends, they will get a makeshift answer because their friend does not master the material unlike the lecturer. The third factor is having emotional disturbances. Emotional disturbances like moody, irritably, angry, or unhappy affect students in learning listening comprehension. When the students have emotional disturbances, they will find it difficult to concentrate when following listening lessons. When they cannot concentrate they will not be able listening to the audio clearly. Because of that, the lecturer must be able to arouse students' enthusiasm in learning so that they feel happy and comfortable.

The fourth factor is the lecturer explains the material too quickly. Most of the students found difficulties in listening because the lecturer explains the material too quickly. The students hard to understand the learning material if the lecturer explain it too quickly. They also felt bored and lazy because they did not understand. Therefore, the lecturer must explain the material clearly and interestingly so students are easy to understand. The last factor is lack of reward and reinforcement. Reward and reinforcement really needed in the learning process, especially listening. It will increase students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. Unfortunately, many students mentioned that the lecturer rarely give reward and reinforcement in the learning process. That is why they were not felt enthusiasm in following the learning process of listening.

A. Data Analysis from Interview

There were 6 students that had been interviewed by the researcher. The students were given 5 questions related to the difficulties in listening comprehension and the factors which cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The first question about students' difficulties related to the listener. Almost all of the students found difficult in listening comprehension related to the listener was because they lose focus and sleepy when they listening to the audio. They lose focus because of the noisy sounds from the outside of the class. The other problem was the native speaker speaks too fast and used the different accents.

The second question about students' difficulties related to listening material. Almost all of the students found difficult in listening comprehension related to the listening material were because they found new vocabularies that they did not know the meaning. The other problem that they found was because the speaker speaks too fast and used different accents. The third question about students' difficulties related to the speaker. Accents of the speaker and the speed of the speaker make almost all of the students found difficult in listening comprehension related to the speaker. However, there was only one respondent that felt new vocabulary that said by the speaker made her confused and found difficult in listening comprehension.

The fourth question was about the factors which cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension. Most of the students answered that lack of focused was the main factor that caused students' difficulty in listening comprehension. Lack of motivation, unclear sounds from the audio, noises and panic before listening were the other factors that caused student' difficulties in listening comprehension. The last question about whether students have ever felt bored in the listening process and the reasons why. Almost all of the students have felt bored during the listening process. They felt bored because of various reasons. There were two students that said unknown vocabulary was the reason why they get bored in listening. The other students said a few reasons why they felt bored during listening process, they were: the lecturer was not in a good mood, the audio was too long, and unfamiliar topic.

2. Discussion

1) Students' difficulties in listening comprehension

The finding of first research question indicated that students' difficulties in listening related into three categories. There were related to the listening material, the listener, and the physical setting.

a. Students' difficulties related to the listening material

Based on the findings, there were several difficulties that students faced related to the listening material. They were complex grammatical structures, difficult to understand every single words of incoming speech, difficult to interpret the meaning of long spoken text, unfamiliar topic, and new vocabularies. These findings were similar with the research conducted by Assaf (2015), in his research entitled "The difficulties encountered by EFL learners in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the Arab American University-Jenin". This research found that unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structure, jargons and idioms, and unfamiliar topics were the difficulties that students face in listening comprehension related to the listening material. Moreover, Hasan (2000) pointed out that unfamiliar words, long complex texts and difficult grammatical structures were the difficulties that students face in listening comprehension related to the listening material.

b. Students' difficulties related to the listener

Besides the listening material, the students also found difficulties related to the listener. It means that they found difficulties in listening comprehension because of themselves. Asmawati (2017) states that lack of English language skill from the listener also make them found difficulties in listening comprehension. According to findings, there were several difficulties that students' faced in listening from the listener factor. They were anxiety, difficult to infer the meaning of unknown words, unable to concentrate, unclear pronunciation, hard to remember, lose focus and sleepy.

c. Students' difficulties related to the physical setting

The last category that makes students found difficulties in listening comprehension is coming from the physical setting. Tersta and Novianti (2016: 35) defines that "The physical setting is an external factor which influences the students on hearing the tape recorder in the class". Based on the findings, there were 7 difficulties related to the physical setting. They were poor quality of tapes and disks, poor equipment, lack of pauses, inability to get repeated, noises, variety of accents, and speed of delivery. This supports Rosa (2012) who argues that poor pronunciation is the main problem leading to the students' difficulty in listening comprehension.

2) Factors that cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension

Based on the findings, there were several factors that cause students found difficulties in listening comprehension. They were depend on others, shame to ask the lecturer about the material, having emotional disturbances, the lecturer explains the material too quickly, lack of reward and reinforcement, and unfocused. Otherwise, Kurniawati (2015) mentioned a few factors that cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension, they were declining health

condition or illness, the elusive material, lack of support, lack of training to improve English listening whether with their classmates or with native speaker.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

1. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion above, the difficulties that the students faced in listening comprehension were related into three categories. They were related to the listening material, the listener, and the physical setting. Each category has different difficulties. Students difficulties in listening comprehension related to the listening material were complex grammatical structure, difficult to understand every single words of incoming speech, difficult to interpret the meaning of long spoken text, unfamiliar topic, and new vocabularies. Meanwhile, from students' difficulties related to the listener were anxiety, difficult to infer the meaning of unknown words, unable to concentrate, unclear pronunciation, hard to remember, lose focus and sleepy. Also, from the physical setting, the students found difficulties like poor quality of tapes or disks, poor equipment, lack of pauses inability to get repeated, noises, variety of accents, and speed of delivery.

Besides, there were 6 factors that cause students found difficulties in listening comprehension. They were depend on others, shame to ask the lecturer about the material, having emotional disturbances, the lecturer explains the material too quickly, lack of reward and reinforcement, and unfocused.

2. Suggestion

Based on the findings and the conclusion of the research, there were some suggestions offered. First, students need to practice regularly and enriched their vocabulary mastery. One of the ways that students could do is by listening to English songs or watching western movies. They also could learn various accents by doing that. Second, the lecturer should find a good strategy in teaching listening comprehension in order to increase students' enthusiasm in learning listening. The lecturer also must be able to create a comfortable and pleasant classroom atmosphere. Finally, since this study already talked about students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The researcher suggests the next further researcher to focus on the other topic.

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