Topic Familiarity and Genre Familiarity: Which One Contributes More to Listening Comprehension?

Familiaritas Topik dan Familiaritas Genre; Yang Mana Berkontribusi lebih pada Pemahaman Menyimak?

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Abstract
The role of prior knowledge, also known as background knowledge or schemata, has been acknowledged in realm of English Language Teaching, including teaching Listening. Due to the profound role of prior knowledge, experts and practitioners compromise that the first step of teaching listening is building the students' prior knowledge. However, there is dilemma which background knowledge has the strongest relationship to students' listening comprehension, either content schemata (Topic Familiarity) or formal schemata (Genre Familiarity). Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the relationship and contribution of topic and genre familiarity to listening comprehension and eventually determining the better predictor of listening comprehension. Furthermore, fourth semester ELT students at Universitas Negeri Malang, one of the leading Universities in Indonesia, who were taking advance listening course participated as the subjects in this study. The findings of this study revealed that the contribution of topic familiarity was significantly higher than genre familiarity. This result also pointed out that topic familiarity was better predictor of listening comprehension.

Keywords: Topic familiarity, Genre familiarity, Listening comprehension.

Abstrak
Peran pengetahuan awal, juga dikenal sebagai skema, telah diakui dalam bidang Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, termasuk pengajaran Menyimak. Karena peran mendalam dari pengetahuan awal, para ahli dan praktisi berkompromi bahwa langkah pertama mengajar keterampilan menyimak adalah membangun pengetahuan awal siswa. Namun, ada dilema yang muncul yaitu pengetahuan awal yang mana yang berkontribusi paling besar terhadap pemahaman menyimak siswa, apakah Familiaritas topik atau Familiaritas genre. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki hubungan dan kontribusi dari topik dan genre terhadap

pemahaman keterampilan menyimak dan pada akhirnya menentukan prediktor yang lebih baik untuk pemahaman menyimak. Selanjutnya, mahasiswa semester empat ELT di Universitas Negeri Malang, salah satu Universitas terkemuka di Indonesia, yang mengambil mata kuliah *Advance Listening* berpartisipasi sebagai subjek dalam penelitian ini. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa kontribusi Familiaritas topik secara signifikan lebih tinggi daripada Familiaritas genre. Hasil ini juga menunjukkan bahwa Familiaritas topik merupakan prediktor yang lebih kuat dalam pemahaman menyimak. .

Kata Kunci: Familiaritas topik, Familiaritas genre, pemahaman menyimak

A. INTRODUCTION

The shifting paradigm on how experts view listening skill and how practitioners practice listening instruction in class is the milestone of listening skill. Listening, that was considered as passive process merely learnt through exposure, turns out to be an active process which involves various knowledge including linguistics knowledge (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, intonation) and non-linguistics knowledge (knowledge of surrounding) bringing all together to interpret the message delivered (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). More precisely, the listeners undergo complex processes starting from noticing the sound, focusing on the pronunciation and intonation, and using all means necessary to understand the content of spoken language. This turning point in fact brought along great changes in terms of methods, strategies, activities involved, as well as factors affecting and contributing to listening comprehension. Since then, there have been an increasing number of studies focusing on listening comprehension.

In terms of factors contributing on students' comprehension, prior knowledge has been undeniably crucial in listening comprehension. As the matter of fact, building students' familiarity is the first step of listening instruction which has been agreeably implemented for years (Richard, 2005; Nunan, 2002; Goh, 2008). This acknowledgment does not come without justification in which prior knowledge is proven to be favorable in elevating students' comprehension. Sulistyo (2011) highlights the importance of prior knowledge in which it assists the students to predict unknown words and structure and make the inference. Furthermore, Lin (2002) adds that prior knowledge provides a great assistant to the listeners to fill the gap of information which is not stated explicitly in the text.

Tudor & Tuffs (1991), and Carrel (1983) classify prior knowledge, also known as background knowledge or schemata, according to its reference; formal schemata and content schemata. Formal schemata, called Genre Familiarity (GF) in this study, concerns knowledge on how the texts are arranged or knowledge of the rhetorical pattern of a text (Sharp, 2002; Bilokcuglo, 2014). More specifically, GF includes the knowledge on various text types, the function, and the organization and language features of the text which differ from one text to another. It is believed that knowing the generic structures and linguistics features of text is beneficial to predict the content and focus their attention upon detail information. In cause and effect text, for instance, the students will predict the information that they are going to hear either several effects on single cause or several causes on single effect. On the other hand, content schemata, called Topic Familiarity (TF), concern the knowledge on the content of the spoken and written discourse. The sources of prior knowledge can be from reading book/ magazines/ newspaper, watching or listening news and real experience.

The importance of prior knowledge both on topic and genre has been acknowledged in teaching English; especially in reading and listening as receptive skills. In fact, considerably amount of studies have been undertaken to provide empirical evidence showing the importance of possessing prior knowledge in both listening and reading comprehension (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Hayati, 2009; Mai et al, 2014; Rahimi, 2012; Priebe et al, 2012; Hu, 2012 Chang, 2016). These studies have been focusing on the great benefits and the contribution of prior knowledge in general. However, just a few studies carried out to reveal

the type of prior knowledge that contributes to listening and reading comprehension comprehension (Rahmaniah, 2015; Sharp, 2012).

In regard to TF, getting the students familiar with the topic listened or read empirically enhances their comprehension. A correlational study undertaken by ovilia (2019) revealed that TF contributed significantly to students' listening comprehension which implies that students who listen to a familiar topic, without doing any pre-listening activities building up students' background knowledge, will achieve higher comprehension. Furthermore, a study conducted by Chiang and Dunkel (1992) also revealed that possessing the knowledge on topic extremely likely helped the listeners understand the message better. Similar to Chiang and Dunkel's work, Zohrabi et al (2014) conducted a study in an attempt to find out the impact of giving additional information before the students do listening activities. It was revealed that the students who got familiarize with the topic by receiving additional information both orally and visually on the topic before listening got a higher score than the students who did not get additional information. Due to the positive result of possessing prior knowledge, several activities and strategies such as Dynamic System Theory (Qiu and Huang, 2012), schema-activation (Jia, 2010), Pre-task activities (Farrokhi & Modarres, 2012), and Review the vocabulary and verb conjugation as prelistening activities (Elkhafaifi, 2005) have also been implemented to familiarize the students to the topic and the results showed significant improvement in students' comprehension. Besides, in the stance of reading comprehension, findings of the study conducted by Priebe, Keenan and Miller (2012) also significantly reinforced the role of prior knowledge about the content. The finding showed that the group of poor readers with prior knowledge related to the topic was significantly better than the group of poor reader without prior knowledge related to the topic.

Furthermore, not only does TF give significant effect on students' comprehension, but it is also the best predictor of students' comprehension. However, most of the studies carried out focus on the relationship of prior knowledge to reading comprehension. A study by Rydland et al (2012) investigated the relationship of word decoding, vocabulary, and prior knowledge to reading comprehension of fifth-grade students. A questionnaire with 19 items related to global warming was used to measure the students' familiarity with the topic: global warming. The result showed that prior topic knowledge was the most influential and best predictor in reading comprehension. The third study, which was carried out by Eidswich (2010), investigated the relationship of students' interest, prior knowledge and their reading comprehension. To find out the students' interest and prior knowledge related to the topic, he gave questionnaires using the 6 likert-scale containing 11 topics to the students. The result revealed that the students' interest and prior knowledge contributed more to students' reading comprehension.

Moreover, in regard with GF, a number of studies have been undertaken to find out the effect of building students' formal schemata upon students' comprehension both in reading and listening skills. A study conducted by Sharp (2012) revealed that knowing text structures assisted the students to find the sentence relationship, topic and ideas when they are listening. In the stance of reading comprehension, Sharp (2002) and Zhang (2008) conducted experimental study in which the students were exposed to several types of text structure. Findings showed that treatments by exposing students to various text structures indeed gave effect to reading comprehension. Besides, relation between GF and students' comprehension is quite apparent as it is shown by Eliza (2011) in her study. She conducted correlation study in attempt to investigate relationship of GF and students' reading comprehension. The findings showed that GF was significantly contributed to students' reading comprehension.

One of the studies investigating GF and TF simultaneously in one study was conducted by Rahmaniah (2015). She conducted an ex post facto research to investigate the strongest relationship of Topic Familiarity (TF) and Genre Familiarity (GF) to reading comprehension across gender. Gender gap between female and male students' comprehension has become a concern for researchers and it is hypothesized that genre and topic familiarity are the factors affecting their reading comprehension.

The results revealed that TF significantly contributed to female and male reading comprehension, while GF showed otherwise. GF

Based on the empirical findings and theories, prior knowledge strongly enhances students' comprehension. The previous studies mostly investigated the contribution of TF and GF to students' reading comprehension. In stance of listening comprehension, this study needs to be conducted due to the fact that revealing the contribution of TF and GF may assist the teachers to select and design more appropite strategies in enhancing students' comprehension. Responding to this gap, this present study attempted to investigate the degree of relationship between topic familiarity and genre familiarity to students' listening comprehension and eventually found out the best contributor of listening comprehension either TF or GF.

B. RESEARCH METHOD
Design

This study was correlational study. It aimed to investigate the relationship of TF, GF and listening comprehension. Correlational design gives the chance for the researchers to measure the degree of relationship of several variables (Creswell, 2012). Besides, the prediction design was specifically employed. Thus, TF and GF were the predictor variable and students' listening comprehension was the criterion variable.

Population and samples

93 fourth semester ELT students who were taking advance listening course at Universitas Negeri Malang, one of the leading University in Indonesia, participated in this study. These students were selected due to the fact that they have learnt listening course for three semesters and passed the previous listening courses. As the matter of fact, they were in an advanced level in which they were able to listen to both conversation and long talk. Besides, the technique used was stage random sampling. Among five ELT classes in this university, four classes were randomly chosen as the samples, and the remaining class served as the try out class.

Research Instruments

To measure the relationship between TF and GF and students' listening comprehension, TF test, GF test and listening comprehension test were the instruments of the study. Topic familiarity test attempted to investigate the participants' familiarity with the topic. It aimed to find out the participants' background knowledge about the topic and how far they know about the topic. Among many topic areas, nature, education and psychology areas were selected. The selection of the topics firstly was based on the neutral side. Gender, thus, would not be another influential factor in this study. Then, the topics of each area were closely related to the students' life. As it was proposed by Rahmaniah (2015) in her study, one way to measure the familiarity with the topic was using objective test.

GF test aimed at revealing how familiar the students are with genres of the text. The indicators of genre familiarity were observed from the students" ability in identifying the purpose, the organization, and the linguistic features of the text. In addition, the genres of the texts which are generally used in social and academic context are report, descriptive, news item, explanation, procedure, argumentative and exposition texts. For the exposition text, there are several types of method developments such as comparison and contrast, cause and effect, chronological order and classification. Although, they are rooted from the exposition texts, these types of

exposition surely have different organizations, social functions and language features (Oshima and Ann, 2006). From the aforementioned genres, descriptive and two types of exposition (comparison-contrast, and cause-effect) texts were selected. The selection was based on the genres that the students have previously learnt in writing courses. The test was in the form of a close-ended question which contained the questions related to author's purpose/ social function, text organization, language features of the text and text type identification.

The third test was listening test which was constructed to measure the students' listening comprehension. It was the objective test, in the form of multiple-choice items. There were 30 items for listening comprehension test. There were 7 listening audios with 30 questions. The contents of the audio were the short talks and lectures which had a similar organization with the three genres (descriptive, cause-effect and comparison-contrast) and had similar content with the topic familiarity test. The length of the audio was approximately 40 seconds to 90 seconds. The listening test was adopted from TOEFL test.

Technique of Data Analysis

Before analyze the data, the fulfillment of statistical assumptions (Multicollinearity, Normality and Linearity test) were done. These were to see the homogeneity, linearity of data and the relationship of two predictor variables; TF and GF. Furthermore, in analyzing the data Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to measure the degree of relationship of listening comprehension to both TF and GF.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Results of Fulfillment of Statistical Assumptions

The first assumption test done was multicollinearity test. The result of multicollinearity test is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of Multicollinearity test

Variables	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
TF	0.901	1.110	Non-multicollinear
GF	0.901	1.110	Non-multicollinear

Table 1 shows the tolerance value and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value. The tolerance value of predictor variables (TF and GF) was 0.901 which was higher 0.1. Besides, VIF value in this research was lower than 10, meaning that the relationship between these two predictor variables was non-multicollineary. It can be said that the correlation between these variables was weak. Therefore, the process of analyzing the data could be continued.

The second assumption test was Normality test. Table 2 presents the results of normality test using Shapiro Wilk test. The results of the three tests were: 0.967 for TF with significance (sig) 0.19; 0.978 for GF with sig 0.112; and 0.975 for LC with sig 0.71. These results show that the significance values in the three tests were higher than 0.05. Thus, it indicates that these tests had normal distribution of scores.

Table 2. Results of Normality test

Variable	Shapiro Wilk	sig	Conclusion
TF	0.967	0.19	Normal
GF	0.978	0.112	Normal
LC	0.975	0.71	Normal

The last one was linearity and outliers. To see whether the data were linear or non-linear, the residual outliers were investigated. This current research used outliers 3 standard deviations as suggested by Muijs (2004). Table 3 shows the results of residual statistics of linearity test produced by SPSS. There was no Casewise Diagonistic table produced. Therefore, it implies that there were no residual outliers which were higher than 3 standard deviations. Thus, it can be concluded that the data were linear.

Table 3. Residual Statistics for Linearity Test

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	N
Predicted value	57.6669	90.8976	78.3655	5.35193	881
Residual	-36.6503	21.6503	2356	8.91974	569
Std Predicted value	-3.858	2.341	.003	.998	881
Std. Residual	-4.075	2.406	.026	.992	569

Result of Multiple Linear Regression

To find out the correlation of TF and GF to listening comprehension, multiple linear regression was done. The results of the analysis can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)		Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-calculate	Sig
	B	Std.error			
(Constant)	4.814	8.344		0.577	0.565
TF	0.769	0.123	0.565	6.248	0.00
GF	0.39	0.73	0.049	0.538	0.92

The value of Beta coefficient was 4.814 implying that the coefficient of listening comprehension would be 4.814 with the absence of topic familiarity and genre familiarity. Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis, the a score (intercept) was 4.814. The b score (the slope) for topic familiarity was 0.769 indicating that when topic familiarity increased one level, listening comprehension would increase 0.769. Then, the b score for genre familiarity was 0.39 indicating that every one level increased in genre familiarity, listening comprehension would also increase as much as 0.39.

In addition, to find out whether the correlation of topic familiarity and genre familiarity to listening comprehension was significant or not, F-test was conducted. Moreover, this test aimed to find out the level of significance of the F-test, and the result was compared to the level of significance used in this research (0.05). The result of the F-test is presented in the following table.

Table 5. Result of F-test

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	6179.931	2	3089.965	23.014	0.000
Residual	12083.632	90	134.263		
Total	18263.563	92			

Based on the result, the significance value of the F-test was 23.014 and the significance was 0.000. The value of F-table was 3.098. The value of the F-count was higher than the value of F-table. Nevertheless, the p-value was lower than the significance of degree of freedom (α) 0.05. Therefore, there was a significant correlation of topic familiarity and genre familiarity to listening comprehension.

Since there was a correlation of topic familiarity and genre familiarity to listening comprehension, then the correlation of TF and listening comprehension, and correlation of GF and listening comprehension was calculated using partial regression. The result of the correlation between topic familiarity and listening comprehension can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Result of Partial Regression of TF

Predictor Variable	t-count	t-table	p-value	Note
TF	6.248	1.662	0.000	Significant
GF	0.536	1.662	0.92	Not-significant

The t-count shown in the table was 6.248 and it was higher than the t-table (1.662). Furthermore, the p-value was 0.000 indicating that it was lower than α (0.05). Thus, there was a significant correlation between topic familiarity and listening comprehension. Meanwhile, the correlation between GF and listening comprehension showed a different result. The t-count of GF was 0.538 which was lower than the t-table. However, the *p-value* obtained in the analysis, 0.92, was higher than α (0.05). These results indicate that genre familiarity was not significantly correlated to listening comprehension. Based on these results, it obviously shows that the stronger predictor of listening comprehension was TF.

To calculate the contribution of each variable to listening comprehension, the coefficient beta value was squired. From Table 4, it is known that the coefficient beta value of TF was 0.565; thus, the contribution of TF was 31.92%. Meanwhile, the coefficient beta value of GF was 0.049; hence, the contribution of GF was 0.24%. To sum up, TF contributes more towards students listening' comprehension.

Discussion

The finding of the present study revealed that TF was significantly correlated to students' listening comprehension which was showed in correlation coefficient, 0.565. This attested the degree of correlation between TF and listening comprehension which was moderately strong. It further implies that the more familiar the students were with the topic, the higher listening comprehension they had. Furthermore, this finding is supported by and in line with the previous studies in the stance of reading comprehension undertaken by Rahmaniah (2015), Eisdwick (2010), and Rydland (2012).

The correlational study conducted by Rahmaniah (2015) focusing on the relationship between topic familiarity and reading comprehension revealed that topic familiarity was significantly correlated with both female and male students' reading comprehension. Compared to the study carried out by Rahmaniah (2015), the contribution of topic familiarity to listening comprehension was slightly higher than that to reading comprehension. Moreover, Rydland et al (2012) who investigated the relationship of three predictor variables, i.e. prior topic knowledge, word decoding and vocabulary, with students' reading comprehension reported that prior topic knowledge was correlated with reading comprehension and even became the best the

factor contributed the most to students' comprehension. Moreover, the result of study conducted by Eidswick (2010) showed that the students' reading comprehension was higher when they had high interest and the prior knowledge related to the topic.

As a matter of fact, many researchers stress on the profound role of prior topic knowledge/ TF in listening comprehension. Many of them provided plenty of convincing evidence which showed that having prior topic knowledge did increase the students' listening comprehension. Chiang and Dunkel (1992), for example, carried out a study to investigate the effect of speech modification, listening proficiency and prior knowledge on listening comprehension. Concerning the effect of prior knowledge, the participants in this study got higher score in the listening test comprising familiar topic than unfamiliar topic. Schimdt and Rinehart (1994) also conducted a study which was quite similar to the study carried out by Chiang and Dunkel, intended to dig up the effect of topic familiarity on listening comprehension. The result showed similar conclusion that the students' scores on familiar topic were significantly higher than those on unfamiliar topic.

Similarly, several more recent studies conducted by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), Salahuri (2011), Hu (2012), Mai et al (2014), Bilokcuoglu (2014), Zohrabi et al (2014) also intended to find out the effect of building students' familiarity toward the topic on their listening comprehension. They came up with various activities and strategies to build the students' prior knowledge on the topic. Mai et al (2014), for example, provided the students with activities called the schema construction activities such as listing words, doing crossword, discussing the topic that they would listen to, and sharing views with the classmates. The results of the aforementioned experimental studies undoubtedly shared the same conclusion that building the students' prior knowledge on the topic significantly increased the students' listening comprehension.

Regarding the results of such experimental studies, some people might still have doubt that the prior topic knowledge on topic /TF really affected the students' listening comprehension. There might be an assumption that those experimental studies showed the positive results since the students had been exposed to the topic before they did listening activities. The result of this study, however, breaks this assumption. Even though the students are not exposed to the topic using any kind of strategies, the higher comprehension can be achieved as long as they are familiar with the topic. Thus, it is verified that topic familiarity does contribute to students' listening comprehension.

Unlike TF which contributes to listening comprehension, GF, however, shows very little contribution. It indicated that the students' familiarity toward the genre did not really contribute to their listening comprehension. In other words, its contribution was not big enough to strengthen students' listening comprehension. In the stance of listening comprehension, compared to the number of studies on content schemata/ topic familiarity, the studies on formal schemata/ genre familiarity are less frequent. Only small numbers of studies are undertaken to investigate the factor affecting and the effect of building students' GF on listening comprehension. As it has been previously mentioned, Rahmaniah (2015) investigated the contribution of TF and GF simultaneously. The degree correlation of TF and GF is completely distinct in which GF was not correlated to students' reading comprehension. However, a study conducted by Eliza (2011) showed that there was a correlation of formal schemata/ genre familiarity to reading comprehension. In the stance of reading comprehension, the correlation of genre familiarity to reading comprehension is still inconclusive.

On the other hand, the result of this study is quite contradictory to the experimental studies in the stance of listening comprehension conducted by Asfina (2014), Tudor and Tuffs (1991), and Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), and in the stance of reading comprehension conducted by Zhang (2008), Amiri (2012), and Fathollahi (2014). These studies aimed to find out the effect of building the students' genre familiarity on their comprehension. The results of the above-mentioned experimental studies showed the positive effect of building the students' prior genre knowledge/ genre familiarity on their listening comprehension. These results are in line with the theories which display that having prior knowledge on text organization improves the students' comprehension (Buck, 2001; Goh, 2008; Chengxing, 2005). Tudor and Tuffs (1991), for instance, involved 3 groups in their study: two experimental groups and one control group. The first experimental group was taught by building their content schemata and the other one was taught by building their formal schemata, while control group did not get those treatments. They found that the experimental groups outperformed the control group, which indicated that the students' familiarity with genre also improved their listening comprehension.

As the matter of fact, the contradictory result between the current study and the previous experimental studies in the stance of listening comprehension could be caused by the practice that the students underwent in those experimental studies. They were exposed to the genre of the text more often and it enabled them to predict and focus on particular information while listening to the audio.

D. CONCLUSION

Prior knowledge is believed as one of the strongest predictors of students' comprehension both in listening and reading. One common idea that people have is that they assume that prior knowledge is only about knowledge on a specific topic/ TF. It is not necessarily wrong. However, prior knowledge also covers the knowledge on genre/ GF. The results of this present study revealed that GF and TF simultaneously correlated to listening comprehension. Partially, TF was significantly correlated to students' listening comprehension, while GF was not. Thus, TF automatically becomes the stronger predictor of listening comprehension. This result indicates without building students' background knowledge on topic, the students' comprehension are enhanced as long as the topic is familiar. Furthermore, this also implicates that the listening teachers need to select the strategies and may do various activities on bulding students' GF to enhance the students' listening comprehension.

In addition, this study limits on one factor affecting sudents' listening comprehension which is prior knowledge. As a matter fact, there are other factors affecting students' listening comprehension such as listening apprehension, linguistic knowledge, vocabulaty knowledge, memory capacity, etc. Hence, future researchers are able to conduct research to reveal the relationship of all these affecting factors by doing path analysis.

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