

STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Lina Anisah¹, La Ode Muh. Idrus Hamid B², Riskawati³

^{1,2,3}ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM, TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
FACULTY, SEMBILANBELAS NOVEMBER UNIVERSITY KOLAKA

lina.anisah@gmail.com¹, idruslaode.usn@gmail.com², riskawati.wr@gmail.com³

Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate students' difficulties in listening comprehension and to find out the causes of students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The design of this research was a case study. In conducting this research, the researcher took class XI IPA 4 of MAN 1 Kolaka as a subject of the research. To collect the data, the researcher used test, questionnaire and interview as instruments. Finally, based on the researcher's investigation, the level of students' difficulty in listening comprehension is classified into middle level, they were, student difficult to concentrate with noise sound (98%), to recognize the words the way they were pronounce (88%), to understand spoken text when speaker spoke too fast (83%), unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD player (81%), to listen to English without transcription (80%), to understand well when the speaker spoke with a variety of accents (80%). Some causes of students' difficulties in listening comprehension were noisy situations in class and environment, students could not match the sounds they heard with any script in their long-term memory, students limited short-term memory, text/passage was recorded while there were noises around or the cassette was used for such a long time, students have limited vocabulary, and unfamiliar accent.

Keyword: *Analysis, Difficulties in Listening Comprehension, Listening Comprehension.*

INTRODUCTION

In English learning covers four main things namely Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading. Other elements of language elements are also taught, including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. All of these components are taught frequently from junior high school until university level. Besides of that, listening is the most important skill to be learned.

According to Rost and Morley in Gilakjadi and Ahmadi (2016), listening is the most important skill for learners because it can be mostly used in normal daily life and develop faster than other language skills. Burley-Allen in Medelshon and Bingol (2014) also stated that, the two importance of listening skill for communication can be seen from the average time that people spent in daily communication. People usually spent 35% for speaking, 16% for reading, 9% for writing and 40% for listening.

Therefore, it can be concluded that listening is more often used in communication and more important than other skills. From the important of listening above, the researcher can conclude that listening is the first skill that can be mastered by the students because listening skill influence to the others skill such as speaking, reading and writing. Listening is the first communication skill we acquire and use. If the students cannot listen, so they cannot respond to others exactly to speak.

Based on researcher observation, In MAN 1 Kolaka has no special schedule for learning listening activities, all of English skills such as speaking, reading, listening and writing are taught integrated. In listening activities, teacher sometimes bring a tape recorder to the class. Teacher provides CDs or cassettes, and then ask 3 students to listen carefully after that the students answer some questions related to CDs or cassettes listened by students. Sometimes teachers ask students to retell or translate what they have listened on the CDs or cassettes. However, this kind of learning and teaching activity was not done very often. It seems that teachers did not allocate more time for listening learning and teaching activities, they prefer to read learning and teaching activities by discussing and understanding many kinds of texts and paragraphs. The researcher has also found a symptom toward their difficulties in listening comprehension. Students are difficult to understand the sentences of the audio because of their limitation of vocabulary.

Definition of Listening

Listening is one of the most important language skills. Listening is the part in communication through listening we can share our ideas with other people. Listening is the most frequently used languages skill in everyday life. Listening can be defined as the activity of paying attention to the spoken language of native speakers. Rost in Vandergrift (2011) has defined listening as a process of receiving what the speaker actually says, constructing and representing meaning, negotiation meaning with the speaker and responding, and creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy. In conclusion, listening is an interactive process to identify and

understanding information from the speaker and responding with an appropriate answer to create a meaningful communication.

Several Difficulties in Listening Comprehension

Hamouda (2013) mentions that listening comprehension difficulties are categorized into different sources including problem related to the listening materials, problem related to linguistic features, problem related to failure to concentrate, problem related to Psychological Characteristic, problem related to listener, problem related to speaker and problem pertaining to physical setting.

1. Problem Related to The Listening Materials

Listening material may deal with any area of life, include street gossip, proverbs, and everyday conversation which is unfamiliar with students.

2. Problem Related to Linguistic Features

Some difficulties in understanding and remembering information from speaker may due to the lack of English language skill itself.

3. Problem Related to Failure to Concentrate

Concentration is also affects for students listening comprehension.

4. Problem Related to Psychological Characteristic

The listening comprehension is also relatively complex psychological process.

5. Problem Related to Listener

Students' problem may arise from their inability to recognize the main words in listening comprehension and understand the spoken text from the first listening.

6. Problem Related to Speaker

Problems of listening comprehension related to speaker can be seen in relation to natural speech, pronunciation, varied accents, and voice heard only on an audio tape cassette recorder without seeing the speaker.

7. Problem Pertaining to Physical Setting

The difficulties not only come from the message, the listener or the speaker, but also come from the environment.

The Cause of Listening Difficulties

Underwood in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) states seven causes of problems to efficient listening comprehension.

1. Listeners cannot control the speed of delivery. He says, "Many English language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening 16 comprehension is that the listener cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks".
2. Listeners cannot always have words repeated. This is a serious problem in learning situations. In the classroom, the decision to repeat the recording is in the teacher/ lecturer; however, it is hard for the teacher to judge whether or not the students have understood any particular section of what they have heard, but students still can repeat what they want to repeat.
3. Listeners have a limited vocabulary. When listener listen to the recording, sometimes they encounter an unknown word, and it is become a reason of the listener to stop listen and think about the meaning of that word and thus cause them to miss next part of speech.
4. Listeners may fail to recognize the signals which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another, giving an example, or repeating a point.
5. Listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Sharing mutual knowledge and common content makes communication easier.
6. It can be difficult for listeners to concentrate in a foreign language. In listening comprehension, even the shortest break in attention can seriously impair comprehension.
7. Students may have established certain learning habits such as a wish to understand every word. Teachers want students to understand every word they hear by repeating and pronouncing words carefully, by grading the language to suit their level, by speaking slowly and so on.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, researcher applied Qualitative Case Study with description method. Mohajan (2018) sated that Qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses on the way of people interpret, and make sense of their experience to understand the social reality of individual. While according to Sturman in Mohajan (2018) Case Study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon. Nassaji (2015) stated that, the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Based on the definition and descriptions above the researcher conducted descriptive research to know the phenomenon and fact of the students' difficulties in learning listening skill with collect and accumulate the basic data in description way.

In this research, the subjects were the second grade students of MAN 1 Kolaka. Based on the preliminary observation and the result of interview, it was found that the second grade students specially in class XI IPA 4 as the subject are chosen had difficulties in listening. The participants consisted of 27 students, 12 males and 15 females.

The researcher used the questionnaire and interview to find out and overcome the problem of English listening comprehension. First, the researcher gave the students listening test. After that the researcher gave them the questionnaire about students' difficulties in listening comprehension. Second, conducted an interview in order to obtain further information and to confirm the result from the previous instrument, the researcher conducted an interview with 6 students. The researcher used audio recorder when interviewed the students to save the data sources which would be analyzed as the data research later. Then data form all the instruments were analyzed and summarize by the researcher. The result was expected to present the information about students' difficulties in listening

Listening Test

In order to know students' score in answering listening test the researcher used the formula:

$$P = \frac{K}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where P = individual score

X = the number of the wrong answer

N = the number of items. Afterward, the average score of students' level difficulty which is given in each item is computed by using the formula from Hartono (2004).

$$Mx = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$$

Where Mx = the mean of students' score,

$\sum Fx$ = the total of students score

N = the total respondents.

To find out the level of the students' difficulties in listening comprehension, the measurement scale was used as prescribed in the following:

Table. 1. Level Difficulties in Listening Comprehension

Level of Difficulties	Score (%)
High	76-100%
Middle	60-75%
Low	0-59%

Arikunto (2006)

Questionnaire

In scoring the questionnaire, the researcher used the Likert scale. Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or a group to the social phenomenon. After collecting all of the data, the researcher analyzed and classified them based on the results of analysis done by the percentage of students'

responses in the questionnaire. To give the weight of each questionnaire, this research used the Likert Scale, adopted from Brown (2010). The scale has five points of continuum, namely: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never. The score of every item depended on the statement. The range of the score statement is from 1-5. To analyze the result of the questionnaire, the researcher calculated the average percentage of each category of the questionnaire. The following formula is used:

$$p = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where P = The percentage

F = Frequency

N = The number of students.

The researcher analyzed the percentage of mean score by using formula adopted from Nazir (2005)

$$\text{Total Score} = S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5$$

$$S1 = \text{Number of respondents (always)} \times (5)$$

$$S2 = \text{Number of respondents (often)} \times (4)$$

$$S3 = \text{Number of respondents (sometimes)} \times (3)$$

$$S4 = \text{Number of respondents (seldom)} \times (2)$$

$$S5 = \text{Number of respondents (never)} \times (1)$$

The Formula of Ideal Score

$$Y (\text{The Highest Score}) = 5 \times \text{number of all respondent}$$

$$X (\text{The Lowest Score}) = 1 \times \text{number of all respondent}$$

The score range for each category of students' difficulties are as follow

Table. 2. Table of Score Range Difficulties in Listening Comprehension

Scale	Agreement	Percentage (%)
5	Very Often	80%-100%
4	Often	60% -79,99%

3	Sometimes	40% -50,99%
2	Seldom	20% -39,99%
1	Never	0% -19,99%

Sugiyono (2012)

Interview

The data obtained from interview will be analyzed through qualitative data analysis. The researcher adopted steps in analyzing qualitative interview proposed by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007).

1. Transcribing the tape recording. After collecting data, the writer needs to re-listen to audio and write the transcriptions a few times.
2. Coding (labeling) the whole transcribed text Manually, the researcher codes the data in a systematic through the entire data set.
3. Seeking for and naming the themes This is the active process. The researcher finds the themes and describes the themes in a way that captures the essence of the theme.
4. Reviewing themes to make sure they fit the data. Those “candidate themes” have to be reviewed. They are candidates because some may not have enough data to support them, or the researcher wants to merge or separate themes or even remove certain themes.
5. The write-up (creating a coherent narrative). The analytic narrative is provided as the report of the interview findings

RESULT/FINDINGS

Listening Test

The researcher used test to know level of students’ difficulties in listening comprehension. The test consists of 20 multiple choice questions. Below was the result of the test regarding with students’ difficulties in listening comprehension.

Table.3. The Average Score of Students Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

No	Percentage of Students' Difficulty Level	F	Fx
1	85	2	1.7
2	75	5	3.75
3	70	5	3.5
4	65	5	3.25
5	60	3	1.8
6	55	2	1.1
7	50	4	2
8	40	1	0.4
Total		27	∑fx=17.5

$$Mx = \frac{\sum FxN}{\sum}$$

$$Mx = \frac{17.5}{27}$$

$$Mx = 64.81\%$$

The table 3 showed that the total frequency of the score range of the respondents in answer the test of listening comprehension. The average score was 64,81%. So, it can be concluded that students' difficulty level in listening comprehension is categorized into "middle" level (60% - 75%).

Questionnaire

The researcher used questionnaire to know students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The questionnaire consisted of 21 statements. After calculating the questionnaire, the researcher found that there were 6 problems that students faced in listening. Here is the summary of students' difficulties, they were:

1. Students cannot concentrate in noisy class. The researcher found that 98% students stated that they cannot concentrate because the noise sound was the most problem that made students difficult in listening
2. Speaker Pronunciation also interfered students listening comprehension, 88% students commented that they difficult to recognize the word due to the way it pronounces.

3. Difficult to understand well when the speaker speaks too fast Based on the finding, 83% of students' difficulties in listening comprehension were due to speakers' speech.
4. Poor CD quality interfere students listening comprehension. 81% of the students stated that the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension were due to the bad recording quality/poor - quality tapes or disks.
5. Lack of transcription. 80% Students stated that they were difficult in listening because they don't have the transcript.
6. Accent. Based on the finding, 80 % students stated that accent was also impact for students listening difficulties.

Interview

Through the data interview, we can see some causes of students' difficulties in listening comprehension.

1. Cannot control the speed of delivery. This is clear in the comment of the students "*kalau speakernya cepat susah diingat kata katanya*" (if the speaker speaks too fast, it difficult to remember what speaker said)
2. Limited vocabulary. Students' vocabulary is also cause students difficulties in listening. "*Kadang cuma tulis saja karena itu apa pengucapannya lain baru kan vocabku juga terbatas*" - (sometimes I only wrote it because the pronunciation is weird and my vocabularies were limited)
3. Anxiety. Some affective causes might distract learners from listening and understanding. Some students stated that: "*takut, karena tidak mengerti apa yang dibilang*" (I was afraid because I don't understand what speaker said)
4. Limited to get repeated. A number of respondents commented that they have listening difficulties because the teacher didn't replay the audio as they want. Here are two reports highlighting this: "*biasanya ketinggalan baru sudah tidak ada pengulangan jadi sudah tidak bisa diperbaiki*" (sometimes I lost it and there was no repetition so I can't fix it anymore)

5. Failure to concentrate. Some students mention that: "*kalimatnya terlalu panjang baru harus ditulis lagi terus didengar baru artinya juga nda di tau. Kelasnya juga ribut jadi mengganggu*" (The sentences are too long, and I have to write it, then I didn't know the meaning. The class also noisy, so it was disturbing me)
6. Signal words. Here was the result of students answer "*iya sulit karena nda ditau kalau misalnya apakah ini sudah lanjut atau seterusnya atau tidak. Kita tambah susah memahami begitu*" (because I did not know if the speaker has moved to another point or not)
7. Lack of contextual knowledge. One of respondents commented that they difficult to understand the audio because sometimes the teacher did not give a clue about what they would hear, so they could not understand the whole part of the audio "*iya, karena tidak ditau atau belum pernah kita dengar materinya, misalnya tentang tempat jadi kita juga ngambang*" (yes, because I did know or I have never heard the material, for example about the place, so I feel confused).

DISCUSSION

Listening is the first skill that can be mastered by the students because listening skill influences to the others skill such as speaking, reading and writing. Listening is the first communication skill we acquire and use. If the students cannot listen, so they cannot respond to others exactly to speak. Worthington & Hauser (2012) stated that, listening is a critical life competency. It is fundamental to all other communication competencies speaking, writing, and reading.

Besides of the importance of listening skill, EFL learners have a problems in listening. According to Hamouda (2013), EFL learners have crucial problems in listening comprehension because school and university pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not significant part of many books and teacher do not consider these skills in their classes. Based on researcher observation, In MAN 1 Kolaka have no special schedule for learning listening

activities, all of English skills such as speaking, reading, listening and writing are taught integrated. In listening activities, teacher sometimes bring a tape recorder to the class. Teacher provides CDs or cassettes, and then the students listen carefully after that students answer some questions related to CDs or cassettes listened by students. Sometimes teachers ask students to retell or translate what they have listened on the CDs or cassettes. However, this kind of learning and teaching activity was not done very often. It seems that teachers did not allocate more time for listening learning and teaching activities, they prefer to have reading learning and teaching activities by discussing and understanding many kinds of texts and paragraphs. The researcher has also found a symptom toward their difficulties in listening comprehension. Students are difficult to understand the sentences of the audio because of their limitation of vocabulary. The researcher tries to examine one of the English skills namely listening, especially listening difficulties.

First, the researcher gave the students listening test. The researcher used test to know level of students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The test consist of 20 multiple choice questions. The researcher analyzed students' test by using formula from Hartono (2004) and categorized students' level difficulties in listening comprehension by using formula from Arikunto (2006). The average score was 64,81%. So, it can be concluded that students' difficulty level in listening comprehension is categorized into "middle" level (**60% - 75%**).

After that the researcher gave them the questionnaire about students' difficulties in listening comprehension. There were 21 statements that given to the students. The first aspect of the questionnaire was about listening material. The first statement was about unfamiliar words. Based on the percentage above, it can be concluded that 62% of students difficult in listening comprehension when there were too many unfamiliar words in listening text. The second statement related to the listening material was about complex grammatical. The students felt that the complex grammatical effect for students' comprehension. Students' difficult to

understand the spoken text, when the grammatical was too complex. From the result of questionnaire, it was found that the percentage of this statement was 65% (often). The third statement was about long spoken text. From the result of questionnaire above, it can be concluded that 75% (often) students feel distracted when they listened to long spoken text.

The second aspect was linguistic feature. The first statement was about the signal words. The result showed that 60% (often) of students difficult understand the reduce form. The second statement was about signal words. The table above showed that, 60 % (often) students difficult to recognize the signals which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another point. The third statement was about long spoken text. The percentage of all answers were 61% (often) students difficult to follow the sequence of the spoken text when the sentences are too long and complex.

The third aspect was failure to concentrate. The first statement was contained about 73% (often) students were unable to concentrate because they search for another answer while listening. For the second statement was about lose concentration. The result showed that, there were 67% (often) students lose their concentration when the text was too long. The last statement from this aspect was about lost concentration because thinking about the meaning of the new word. It can be seen on the table above this problem faced by the students in the level of often category with percentage 88,7%.

The fourth aspect was psychological characteristic. The first statement was about nervous. The result showed 77% (often) of students felt nervous when they don't understand the spoken text. The second statement was about lack of interest. The result showed that 57% (often) of students felt difficult in listening when the text is not interested to them. Students would stop to listen to the spoken text because it was not interesting and made them bored to listen to it. The third statement was about anxiety. The table above showed that 62% (often) students

stated that before doing listening they fear that they cannot understand what they heard.

The fifth aspect was about listening difficulties related to listener. The first statement was about inability to recognize the word because the way it pronounced. From the percentage, it can be concluded that 74% (often) students difficult to understand the meaning of the words which are not pronounced clearly. The second statement was problem pertaining to the memory. The percentages of all answers were 72% (often) students difficult to quickly remember words or phrases they have just heard. The last statement was about problem pertaining to lack transcription. The table above show that 80% (very often) students it difficult when listening to English without transcription.

The sixth aspect was about listening difficulties related to speaker. The first statement was pronunciation. It can be seen on the table that 88% (very often). The second statement was about accent. From the percentage of the statement above, 80% (very often) students difficult to understand well the speaker speaks with a variety of accents. The last statement of this aspect was speed delivery of the speaker. The percentages of all answers were 83% (very often) students difficult to understand the recorder material when the speaker spoke too fast.

The seventh aspect was about listening difficulties related to physical setting. The first statement was noise. From the percentage of the statement above, 89% (very often) students difficult to concentrate with noise sound. The second statement was about poor quality of disks. The result showed 81% (very often) students difficult in listening because the unclear sound of quality if the CD. The last statement was about poor equipment. Form the total of answers, it can be seen that 76% (often) students difficult in listening because unclear sound from poor equipment.

Second, conducted an interview in order to obtain further information and to confirm the result from the previous instrument, the researcher conducted an

interview with 6 students. The researcher used audio recorder when interviewed the students to save the data sources which would be analyzed as the data research. Then data from all the instruments were analyzed and summarized by the researcher. The result was expected to present the information about students' difficulties in listening. As for the causes of students' difficulties in listening comprehension were noisy situations in class and environment, students could not match the sounds they heard with any script in their long-term memory, students limited short-term memory, text/passage was recorded while there were noises around or the cassette was used for such a long time, students have limited vocabulary, and unfamiliar accent.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to investigate what are students' difficulties in listening comprehension, and what causes students' difficulties in listening comprehension. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the average score of students' difficulty in listening comprehension was categorized into middle level, and there are six difficulties in listening comprehension, they were: (89%) Student difficult to concentrate with noise sound, (88%) Students difficult to understand spoken text when speaker speak too fast, (83 %) Students difficult to recognize the words the way they are pronounce, (81%) Unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD player interfered students' listening comprehension, (80%) Students difficult in listening to English without transcription, (80%) Students difficult to understand well the speaker speaks with a variety of accents.

The most difficult problems which was faced by the second grade students of class XI IPA 4 was related to physical setting which was noise with the percentage 89%. It made them unable to concentrate in listening class. As for the causes of students difficulties in listening comprehension were noisy situations in class and environment, students could not match the sounds they heard with any

script in their long-term memory, students limited short-term memory, text/passage was recorded while there were noises around or the cassette was used for such a long time, students have limited vocabulary, and unfamiliar accent.

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