An Analysis of Students' Difficulties In Listening Comprehension at English Education Department in Faculty of Teacher Training And Education of Universitas Ekasakti

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Abstrak

Listening is part of the English language skills component which is quite complex in EFL (English as Foreign Language) learning practices. Difficulties in this skill is experienced by students in the Indonesian context consisting of various ethnicities, languages and cultures. Listening skill would enable people to improve their ability in communication. However, in some cases of EFL classes, college students still find difficulties in learning this skill since it needs more attentions and concentrations in order to comprehend the language materials. This study tries to discover the listening difficulties encountered by English Education Department students of faculty of teacher training and education in Universitas Ekasakti while taking the listening courses. The design of this research was descriptive research with population were the second-year students who have taken the Listening comprehension. They were 17 members . The researcher used total sampling technique to take the sample so all population was sample. The instrument used was listening comprehension test. The results of the study showed that there are four main categories of students' difficulties in listening, namely: difficulties related to the learning materials (unfamiliar topics, topic that doesn't exist in students' cultures, too many unfamiliar words, and the length of the spoken texts); difficulties related to the speakers (unclear pronunciation, varieties of accents, and the speed of speaking); difficulties related to the listeners (inferring the meanings of unknown words, losing concentration, memory, and the length of the questions); and difficulties related to the physical settings (noises around, the online learning media used, and the internet connection).

Keywords: An Analysis, Difficulties, Listening Comprehension, Universitas Ekasakti

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I INTRODUCTION

People start learning language through listening, from the very beginning of their lives. Hence, listening plays a very crucial role in language learning process since it is the most commonly used skill in daily life. This theory is supported by Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) who state that listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. Further, Morley and Rost (cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) reveal that listening is the most crucial skill for language learning because it develops faster than the other language skills which indicates that it would enable people

to master the 3 other language skills. For short, it could be said that through listening, people will greatly improve their ability in communicating to each other.

Hien (2015) states that listening as foreign language learning is important since it presents the language input. Learning all the skills in English is important including learning listening. But the fact that is found is that listening often gets a small portion of learning compared to other skills such as grammar learning. High school students are good in solving grammar-base test but they find themselves confused in solving listening questions.

Listening is the process of understanding speech in a first or second language. The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. Listening comprehension activities typically address a number of listening functions, including general topic recognition, the emotional tone. The process begins with comprehension of main ideas, understanding and recall of details (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). It is different from hearing, which is the physiological process of the ear absorbing sound waves and transferring them along neural path-ways to parts of the brain. Hearing is necessary for listening, but listening is much more than processing sound.

In some cases of the language classroom settings, listening was recognized as the most difficult language skills to learn since it requires more attentions and concentrations in order to comprehend the language materials including dialogue and monologue texts. Besides that,

listening is considered as a complex process in which many things happen simultaneously inside the mind (Darti and Andi Asmawati, 2017). This has become the lecturer's responsibility to facilitate students to learn better in listening. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2003), difficulty means the fact of not being easy to do or understand. Difficulty is also defined as any learning or emotional problem that affects, or substantially affects, a person's ability to learn.

The reseracher is desired to conduct a listening-related research after directly observed teaching learning process in English Education department. The reseracher found that ineffective teaching-learning process occured in which only a small portion of listening parts were taught to students. The lecturer mostly teach the other skills excluding listening. They said that listening is the most difficult part for students in learning English.

The researcher found some problems the students were lack of vocabulary, so they had difficulty to understand the recording in listening section. The students had difficulty to discriminate voiced and voiceless and minimal pair sounds in phoneme discrimination test, they were also lack of vocabulary. Thus, they had difficulty to understand short dialogue by answering multiple choice items. The students did not understand the grammar that used in the text and they had common mistakes in spelling in filling in the blank question. Based on the background and the problem above, the question of this research is What is the difficulties faced by students in learning listening at English Education Department of faculty of teacher training and education in Universitas Ekasakti?

II RESEARCH METHODS

The method of this research is descriptive research. According to Gay (1987: 189) in Marzona, descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the research. The population of this research is the second-year students of English education department at FKIP in UNES. There were 17 students. The number of the students can be seen in the following table:

table 1. Clarification of population

No.	Department	Number of students
1	English education	17
2	Total	17

(source: English education department)

4.	55-64	Less
5.	0-54	Very less

(Source: Tegeh & Kirna, 2010)

1. The researcher presented the raw score from two scorer
2. The researcher counted the average score of two scorers by using the formula:
3. The researcher calculated Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) ∑ Where: M = Mean N = Total number of the sample ∑ = Total score of the students SD = Standard Deviation
4. The researcher categories the students' skill into high, moderate, and low skill by using the following categories (Arikunto, 2002: 299) >M + 1SD = high (M – 1 SD) => (M + 1 SD) = moderate >M – 1 SD = low

There are many sampling techniques that can be used in taking a sample, but the researcher chose total sampling technique. In instrument of the research, the researcher used listening comprehension ssstest. According to Brown (2004: 3) in Marzona (2021) define that "test is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain". The data collected through listening test and scored by the reseracher. Each of students was asked to answer a test. The researcher distributed listening sheet and asked the students to answer the question it. In analysing the data, the researcher analysed the data of the students' skill in listening comprehension test with such as follows:

The researcher gave score to the test. If the students get right answer the score is 10. And if the students get wrong answer the score is 0. The researcher is assessed the value of the score based on this table 2:

No.	Achievement Rate (%)	Qualification
1.	90-100	Very good
2.	75-89	Good
3.	65-74	Enough

The researcher calculated the percentage of the students who got high, moderate, ands low skill by using following formula: x 100% Where: P = percentage of the students' skill F = the sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low skill

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the finding of the research, it would be described as below: The students' difficulties in Listening comprehension
Table 2 The Percentage of Students' difficulties in Listening comprehension

Quality	Number of students	Percentage
Very good	3	17,64%
Good	5	29,41%
Enough	4	23,52%
Less	2	11,76%
Very less	3	17,64%

Based on the criteria of scoring, very good possible score was 100 and very less possible score was 10. The researcher found the highest score that the students got 90 and the lowest score

was 50. Then, the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation. The result of mean was 75.86 and standard deviation was 9.81. Based on the result of data analysis, the researcher found that 3 students (17.39%) got ver good, 5 students (29,41%) got good and 3 students (17,64%) got very less. It means that, the difficulties of students' listening comprehension of English Education Department at FKIP in UNES was good.

Based on the result above, there are some difficulties by the students' while listening comprehension. They are:
Difficulties Related to the Listening Materials The listening material may deal with almost any area of life. It might include street gossip, proverbs, everyday conversation, new products, and

situations unfamiliar to the student. Also, in a spontaneous conversation speakers frequently change topics (Hamouda, 2013). Referring to the table 1, it could be concluded that regarding to the listening materials, 7 students (43.75%) agree and even 3 students (18.75%) strongly agree that understanding listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar is a difficult thing to do in the listening activity.

This result is consistent with Hamouda (2013) who states that familiarity with the topic of the listening texts results in comprehension. On the other hand, unfamiliarity hinders students from comprehension. Further, Darti and Asmawati (2017) reveal that students construct their understanding based on their experience and background of the knowledge. This may be the cause why most students (50% strongly agree and 6.25% agrees) find difficulties in understanding topic which does not exist in their culture.

The problems may affect them because maybe they lack of reading about the topics being discussed. Hence, they need to increase their knowledge by reading and get more listening practices with wide ranges of topic. Those results are supported by the listening lecturer of English Education Department at Faletehan University who declares: In the listening course, I always provide the students with wide ranges of topics, starting from the simple ones to the more complicated ones.

The topics should enhance their listening ability as well as their knowledge related to the topics. The topics themselves could be about everyday life, people, places, education, health, environment, business and economy, science, and even culture. I choose the topics that are suitable with their level. However, in practice, students often find difficulties especially when the topic is not of their interest or when the topic discusses something which does not exist in their culture.

This is because they do not have any idea or maybe they only have a little background knowledge about the topic. Take for example, I provide an audio about history of the Ottoman Empire. Some of the students did not know about the Ottoman Empire. Some others only heard about it once in the past, but they did not have any idea about that. Of course, this will make the listening difficult. This has become every listening lecturer to give a short review of the topic before having the listening activities. Unfamiliarity with words also interfere students'

comprehension in listening. Vocabulary has become a big obstacle for most students (50% agree and 31.25% strongly agree) in their listening activity.

They find it difficult to comprehend even simple materials when there are too many new words that haven't been learned previously. It means that they have insufficient of vocabulary mastery. This finding coincides with Butt (2010) and Hanoi (2010) who reported that the major problem hindering listening comprehension was that the students' vocabulary was too limited to understand the messages.

The data also proves the theory realized by Underwood (cited in Hamouda, 2013) that lack of vocabulary is a big obstacle to most students in listening comprehension. The interview revealed The biggest problem that most of my students face in the listening course is their limitation of the vocabulary mastery. They cannot understand what the speakers are saying every time they are exposed to new words. Hence, I have tried to introduce the vocabulary related to the topic before getting the students to listen to the audios or watch videos related to the materials. However, sometimes they still find difficulties even though we have discussed the vocabulary first.

They need more time to recall the vocabulary over and over in order to enhance their mastery. In addition to the unfamiliarity of the topic, topic which does not exist in their cultures, and insufficiency of the vocabulary, the length of the spoken text is one of the main reasons why students cannot understand most of the talks. The table shows that 6 students (37.5%) agree and 5 (31.25%) of them strongly agree that long spoken texts interfere with their listening activity.

This finding is consistent with Hamouda (2013) who declares that the length of the text can be one major factor that negatively affects the learners' listening comprehension. This is because they feel tired trying to understand the unfamiliar sounds for long time. Students feel fatigue and distracted when they listen to a long spoken text. Further, in their finding, Diora & Rosa (2020) reveal that the meaning of long spoken texts are difficult to be interpreted by the students as the interview shows: My students prefer short to long spoken texts in their listening activities. Even they think that a 4-minute-spoken-text of the native speakers has been too long for them.

They cannot focus on understanding of what the speakers are saying since there is too

much information to process from the long spoken texts. Problems with memories or even fatigue could distract students' attention from grasping the meaning of the text. Further, they could miss the rest of the text when they cannot concentrate on such long texts.

Difficulties Related to the Speakers

Speakers are sources of the audios and videos. Speakers are usually the native speakers of English that could be British, Americans, or Australians. Sometimes, speakers are not the native ones. They could be Europeans, Asians, Africans, or Latin Americans From the table 2, it could be inferred that most students (68.75% agree and 12.5% strongly agree) find difficulties in understanding the meanings of words which are not pronounced clearly. It means that unclear pronunciation has become a source of problem in students' listening activities since it makes them unsuccessful in grasping the meaning of the spoken texts.

This result is consistent with Hamouda (2013) and Darti and Asmawati (2017). Further, the interview reveals, "Many of my students do not have good pronunciation mastery. They recognize the words in written forms, but they couldn't pronounce them accurately.

Hence, they find difficulties in recognizing what the speakers are saying." Related to the speakers' accents, 6 students (37.5%) agree and 4 of them (25%) strongly agree that varieties of accents are other sources of difficulties in listening activities. It is because they do not have much exposure to different accents.

They have been familiar with their lecturers' and classmates accents but they are not familiar with the native accents. Thus, they feel confused with British English, American English, and Australian English because the pronunciation and intonation are quite different. So are different speakers from different places

IV CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it could be concluded that students face varieties of difficulties when learning listening. Those difficulties have been categorized into two major classes, namely difficulties related to the listening materials, difficulties related to the speakers. Each difficulty may contribute to hinder the students from comprehension of the spoken language inputs.

If this is not solved, students may find it hard to master the other three language skills since listening is the basic of the four skills of language. Hence, the lecturers must use effective strategies and choose interesting topics as well as create as fun as environment and activities to let students enjoy the listening courses and comprehend the information from the listening materials.

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