



## STUDENTS' PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED DURING LISTENING ACTIVITIES IN STKIP AL MAKSUM LANGKAT

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated students' problem encountered during listening activities in STKIP Al Maksu Langkat. The subjects were eighty-three students of the first semester of English Department Study Program. Basic qualitative studies suggest by Ary adopted in this study. Questionnaires and interview administered in order to collect the data. The data informed that there were difficulties faced by the students in the listening activities, they were the speakers' speed, the accent of the speaker, unknown words, and difficulties in recognizing main points. It was expected that enhancing students' motivation to practice listening with authentic materials and in every learning activities administering authentic materials deemed necessary in order to insincere a real situation of native talks and conversation to understand the culture and points in their talks. Acquiring amounts of vocabularies expected enhanced by the students in order to ease the listening activities.

**Keywords:** listening, learning problem, ELT, EFL

### I. INTRODUCTION

Listening skill is one of the four major skills of language that most language learners desire to get mastery in order to communicate effectively in different contexts. It is one of the most challenging skills for many students (Jyoti, 2020). In fact, EFL learners struggle to grasp oral English writings in their listening comprehension categories (Zanjani and Izadpanah, 2016). Listening comprehension becomes one of the most difficult skills for most of English learners especially EFL learners due to the status as a foreign language, so that English is rarely used in communication by EFL learners in their daily life. Therefore, the learners or students always face some difficulties/problems in listening comprehension (Erzad, 2020).

Listening has been a growing interest of EFL/ESL researchers and teachers in the last 50 years because the majority of learners view listening as one of the most problematic skills (Zarrabi, 2017). Studies on EFL listening mostly confirmed that due to the lack of exposure to the use of English real language

beyond the classroom time, specifically the use of authentic listening materials in the listening lessons, many students have great difficulty understanding the real language produced by native speakers or the authentic ones they hear (Hamouda, 2020). This challenges also faced by Indonesian EFL learners that also lack of exposure to the authentic environment of English. So that listening classes resulting problematic issues in which EFL learners have difficulties understanding listening text while the native speakers with varied and non-familiar accents. Besides, they were not able to understand meanings which are not pronounced clearly (Novika et al., 2020)

Sari and Fithriyana, (2019) informed that the most difficult indicator of listening comprehension is making inference. The students also have low confidence in listening skill. They cannot concentrate well in listening to the spoken texts. Those problems are influenced by two factors, internal and external factors. Wahidah, (2018) confirmed factors causing students' difficulties in listening were from the speaker, the environment, and the speaker itself. The factors causing the difficulties on listening activities from the biggest percentage were the environment (noisy), poor recording, unfamiliar topics, accent of the speaker, ungrammatical sentences, long listening, concentration or focus, unknown words, uninteresting topic, and recognizing main points. Merilia, (2019) identified several factors that contribute to difficulties in listening comprehension: lack of vocabulary, speaker speed, accent, pronunciation, concentration, and other problems. Further Jyoti, (2020) concluded that the content of the listening text (e.g., unfamiliar words, idiom, feeling fatigue while listening to the long text) was the major source of listening difficulties for the students. The second source of difficulty was related to the listener that included lack of concentration with long listening text and existence of noise in the place. The third difficulty included linguistic features such as complex grammatical structures, pronunciation, and problems in distinguishing the word boundaries. And the last source of listening problem was concerned with speaker's speed of speech and different accents.

Besides, in conducting a listening activity, teachers should pay close attention to speakers' voices, accents, and feedback when designing and implementing tasks to maximize learners' listening learning process (Chi, 2021). Providing sufficient activities are considered necessary (Rosmen et al., 2020). Thus, reviewing a listening activity is deemed necessary in order to conduct a sufficient listening activity.

Moreover, as the world has been shocked by the unexpected rapid disease named COVID-19, several emergency actions are conducted in all aspects of human lives, including in the education field. In Indonesia, all colleges, particularly in several red-zone areas are restricted accessed for several months ahead. All activities inside the institutions' building are limited, and face-to-face classrooms are forbidden and changed into virtual classrooms or called learning from home environments. The use of several applications as a media in teaching English from home was adopted until now because face-to-face classrooms activities were still not fully allowed. Even the students' perception on utilizing some applications in the virtual listening activity was positive (Rosmen et al., 2021), there were also difficulties face by them.

Based on the discussion above, the specific research question to be addressed in this study was as follow: How does the listening activities of STKIP Al Maksum Langkat accured? The objective of the study is to investigate the problem encountered during listening activities in STKIP Al Maksum Langkat.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Listening is the receptive use of language, which is used most frequently. It is used since a baby is born until s/he is in agony. Even, when s/he has been in school, s/he spent almost half their communication time listening. A study conducted by Rankin (1928) (as cited in Huynh & Huy, 2015) showed that when we communicate with others, we spend the largest proposition of time, about 45% in listening, but only 30% in speaking, 16% in reading, and 9% in writing. In line with this, Acat et al., (2016) point out that listening is the first language skill that an individual acquires in his/her life and the one that s/he uses most for the rest of the life.

Listening seems naturally to be the first position out of other language skills (i.e., writing, speaking, and reading) in terms of acquiring new language. Listening is a necessary skill to facilitate the development of English learners' proficiency. For example, skills in listening can help students communicate well in written or orally. Listening skill is the ability to identify the language and understand the meaning of what speakers are saying. Understanding a meaning is hardly easy to do unless s/he has a strong listening skill (Saehu, 2016). Bozorgian & Pilla, (2013) stated that the English language learners need to have strong listening skills to interpret the meaning effectively. Listening usually takes place "in real time" (Renandya & Farrell, 2011) which means that the listener must comprehend the aural input the moment it is uttered. As a result, s/he hardly has time to spare for reviewing and looking up new words.

Teaching listening remains unchanged throughout the course of half a century with three main stages: pre-listening, listening (including both extensive listening for general ideas and intensive listening to answer comprehension questions), and post-listening. The alterations take place only inside each stage. For example, in the post-listening stage, instead of pausing a recording to let students repeat after it, the teacher may now help students to scrutinize functional languages and deduce vocabulary meaning from contexts (Nguyen, 2018).

One of the most popular models of today's listening lesson is based on the comprehension approach (Field, 2010). The comprehension approach to teaching listening is based upon the assumption that students would develop their listening skill by getting maximal exposure to the spoken form of a language. Some of the discernible strengths of this approach to teaching listening involve the fact that this way of teaching enables learners to get high results in exams. One of the most recent approaches to teaching listening more effectively involves incorporating direct instructions of listening strategies into the lesson. This is known as the Strategy Approach. (Graham & Oxford, 1993) defines strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more effective, and more transferrable to new situation".

Listening has been a growing interest of EFL/ESL researchers and teachers in the last 50 years because the majority of learners view listening as one of the most problematic skills (Zarrabi, 2017). Studies on EFL listening mostly confirmed that due to the lack of exposure to the use of English real language beyond the classroom time, specifically the use of authentic listening materials in the listening lessons, many students have great difficulty understanding the real language produced by native speakers or the authentic ones they hear (Hamouda, 2020). Further, listening comprehension becomes one of the most difficult skills for most of English learners especially EFL learners due to the status as a foreign language, so that English is rarely used in communication by EFL learners in their daily life. Therefore, the learners or students always face some difficulties/problems in listening comprehension (Erzad, 2020).

### **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

Basic qualitative method is adopted in this study. Ary *et al.*, (2014: 484) defined that basic qualitative study is targeting to understanding a phenomenon, a process, or a particular point of view from the perspective of those involved. The central purpose of these studies is to understand the world or the experience of another. Thus, this study was conducted to investigate the problem encountered during listening activities in STKIP Al Maksud Langkat.

This study conducted at STKIP Al Maksud Langkat. The subjects were the first semester of English Department Study Program academic year 2021/2022 which were consist of eighty-three students: sixty-one females and twenty-two males. The data collection was collected by distribute standardized questionnaires and interview. Questionaries was distributed in order to take a broad information about the problem encountered during listening activities and then interview conducted to confirm further the result of the questionaries. Then, all the data organized in order to become familiar with the data so that the data can be easily retrieved.

After familiarizing, the next could be labeling or coding of items is done in order to begin to recognize differences and similarities in the data. Coding and reducing was to break apart the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparisons within and between and to develop theoretical concepts. Codes figured represent information expected to find, information did not expect to find, and interesting or unusual information. Once all data sorted into major and minor categories, look at the range of categories and determined whether some fit together into themes. Once data have been completely analyzed and themes developed, the next step was interpretation—going beyond the descriptive data to extract from it meaning and insight in order to bring out the meaning, telling the story, and developing plausible explanations (Ary *et al.*, Idem: 512).

### **IV. DISCUSSION**

#### **Questionaries Data**

Questionaries distributed to the subject via Google Form in order to grasp information about their problems encountered during the listening activities.

Based on the answers, there were four dominant obstacles encountered in their listening in the class i.e., the speakers' speed, accent of the speaker, unknown words and recognizing main points.

No.	Result	Amounts
1.	The speaking speed	36.5%
2.	Accent of the speaker	30.2%
3.	Unknown words	18.7%
4.	Recognizing main points	14.6%

Table 1  
Questionnaires Result

The data confirmed that almost all the respondents, about 36.5% from all the respondents, argued that the speaking speed of the speaker were too speed. The next responds informed that 30.2% of the respondents argued that the accent of the speakers had made them difficult to understand the talks. The least were difficulties in recognize the speakers talks because of the unknown dictions, about 18.7% and the last were the difficulties because of the issues in recognizing main points or the idea of the speakers, there were about 14.6% respondents.

### Interview Result

In order to confirm the questionnaires data, interviewing the respondents also conducted to get in-depth information. Based on the interview result the respondents confirm that the speakers' talks were so fast, different from the lecturers talk as usual in the class.

*“Kedengeran ntah apa gitu yang dibicarakan dari percakapan itu, cepat kali dia bicaranya, maunya di-slow-motion gitu, lagian beda kali dengan percakapan biasa kita di kelas sama dosen dan kawan-kawan kalau speaking”*

(It seems very unclear what was they talking about on the conversation, it was too fast, it should be made in slow-motion recorder, and then it was very different with our conversation with the lecturer or our friends when we had a speaking activities)

It was occurred because of the materials provided by the lecturers were authentic. Most of the listening materials were taken from YouTube and some sites that providing listening materials. So, the accent and the speaking speed was as a native English speaker speaks.

*“British banget ini percakapannya, butuh ekstra memang kalau mendengarkan percakapan yang begini, karena kan memang penutur asli dan percakapannya dalam situasi real mereka”*

(The accent was very British, we had to an extra energy in listening the conversation in this accent, because they were the native speakers, and the conversation was in their real situation)

The vocabulary mastery of the learners also affecting their listening comprehension. They were burdened to comprehend because of the dictions chosen by the speakers were odd. Thus, they were often unable to grasp the conversations' topic.

“Mungkin karena cepat kali ngomongnya makanya cuma beberapa bagian aja yang kedengaran dengan baik, jadi susah juga mudeng dengan apa yang dibincangkannya itu”

(It might be because of the speaking speed, so that only just a few words identified well, so it was difficult to get the point of the conversations)

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above can be concluded that:

There were difficulties encountered by the first semester students of English Department Study Program of STKIP Al Maksu in the listening activities. The difficulties were because of the speakers' speed, accent of the speaker, unknown words and recognizing main points of the conversation in the listening classes. The lack of exposure of English in their daily activities and the fluency of the speakers in the authentic teaching materials that used in the class made them odd to the dictions and difficult to grasp the conversation they were listen to.

Motivate the students to practice in listening with authentic materials in every learning situation and enhancing their vocabularies would be a solution that could be administered. Choosing a topic that they were interested in also deemed necessary in order to make the listening activities more specific and make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more effective.

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