

INDONESIAN STUDENTS' LISTENING ATTITUDES

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Abstract

Obviously listening improves speaking skills. Polytechnic graduates are to have business transaction skills. Meanwhile, the time allotment for English class sessions is limited. Therefore, the teachers are to promote students' autonomous learning through listening. This study investigates how the students major in commerce at an Indonesian polytechnic complete listening tasks and attitudes toward the acquisition of listening skills. Training on how to complete the listening activities through shadowing was carried out with 43 students. A questionnaire was distributed to find out the students' views on the suggested listening activities and their opinions to improve them. The study found students' preferences in practicing listening; most employed 1 or 2 or 3 steps. Most include initial listening, reading, and one of the types of shadowing - silent shadowing with reading or synchronized shadowing or prosody shadowing. None of the students was interested in doing silent shadowing. They admitted that their listening most improved their pronunciation and enriched vocabulary. They expected more lecturer engagement in controlling their listening activity. By better understanding the students' needs and opinions, strategies to encourage autonomous learning can be improved.

Keywords: listening attitudes, shadowing, business transaction skills

INTRODUCTION

Being autonomous learners is considered necessary in joining Secretarial English course at Business Administration study program of an Indonesian Polytechnic for the following reasons. For one thing, at the end of the semester, the students should be able to carry out simple business transactions and do reception tasks. The instruction objectives are focused on developing the speaking function of talk as transaction (Richards 2008). To succeed in doing business transactions, it calls for adequate listening and speaking skills. Meanwhile, the time provided for the instruction is very limited. It is admitted that there is a close relationship between listening and speaking (Richards, 2008; Yalçınkaya et.al.,2009; Zhang, 2009). The teacher should make the classroom session

efficient by focusing on improving the speaking skills; therefore, the students need to spend their time to do out class listening activities.

For another reason, the students have little experience in doing listening activities on their own. For years, there was only limited listening activity involved in their previous English instructions. How the listening instruction is not adequately addressed in Indonesian context is stated by Cahyono and Widiati (2009 p. 202) that based on the 2006 Standard of Content, formally listening skill has the same status as the other language skills, however, there are very limited handy listening materials available. It is confirmed by the finding of the initial survey that 83.7% of students did not undergo listening activities in their high schools. At this point, they likely

need to be trained on how to do listening activities.

Finally, out of class listening activities are possible because every student has a smart phone to practice listening at any time and place they feel comfortable. Shafeeq (2011) and Ferreira (2013) found that the use of CALL and gadgets is more workable with non gifted students. Therefore, promoting the students to be autonomous learners through listening is needed. For those reasons, whether the students do listening in their out of class time, how they do it, and their ideas about how to promote listening as autonomous learning are investigated in this study.

Autonomous Learning in Indonesian Context

The increasing awareness of the importance of promoting the learners' autonomy is happening because of its significant contribution to the learning success (Thornton, 2013). Promoting Indonesian students to be autonomous learners is somehow challenging and invited considerable interest from scholars. Many ELT studies on autonomous learning in Indonesian context have been carried out. Hafifah (2014) found that Student Centered Learning was a good approach to facilitate learners in the English Department to experience autonomous learning and give them more opportunity to perform their skills in public speaking practice in the classroom and also in real settings. Indrawati (2014) revealed that peer response can be instrumental in helping students understand the process of writing and become independent thinkers and writers. Sumarsono (2014) proved that English corner is a potential medium for students to learn English independently as well as to reinforce and even has the possibility to replace English as a subject in the primary school classroom.

At the same time, more studies on autonomous learning which involve ICT

are being conducted. Prihantoro (2009) and Sefrizal (2009) identified that blogs could also involve students in an active learning environment, where they could experience more opportunities for the input of a target language and modify their current inter language capacities. Thus, blogs promote them to be autonomous learners. Yauri and Haji (2013) also worked on promoting self-study of listening skills for Islamic college students through web 2.0 tools. Heriyawati (2014) argued that by using a cellular phone, the students got not only the adequate knowledge related to the language learning, but also they can practice their ability independently. They also practice listening through their cellular phone not only in the classroom but whenever they want. Instead of forbidding the students from using their smart phones, which have been their very close friends for years, why not empower the students by involving their smart phones in their English language learning process in class and out of class time?

Listening, Speaking, and Shadowing

Listening and speaking have a very close relationship (Richards, 2008; Yalçinkaya et.al.,2009; Zhang, 2009). Zhang (2009) studied the effects of listening on speaking skills of 50 second-year Computer Science majors at Qingdao University of Science and Technology, China. The experimental group of 25 students was given appropriate listening and audio-visual authentic materials for a school year in the oral English class. The result shows that listening and speaking ability are closely related, and listening does have positive effects on improving college students' oral English. There is a significant correlation between students' listening and speaking ability. Listening to more appropriate authentic materials can help to improve students' oral English. Therefore, it is advisable for college teachers to include more authentic listening materials in their class, and for

students to try every possible means to get access to positive listening materials. From that study, it can be assumed that it is quite possible to improve polytechnic students' speaking skills by improving their listening skills.

There are many ways to improve students' listening skills. One of them is shadowing technique. Shadowing is defined as "a paced, auditory tracking task with parrot style, using headphones and devised as a means of studying selective attention and practicing for simultaneous interpretation" (Lambert's 1992 in Hamada, 2011). The steps vary; the steps done by Kudota & Tamai (2004 as cited in Hamada, 2011) are mumbling, synchronized reading, prosody shadowing, and content shadowing; and Kurata (2007 as cited in Hamada, 2011) used six steps as follows: full shadowing, slash shadowing, silent shadowing, part shadowing, part shadowing and comment, and part shadowing and question.

A practical way to employ shadowing is suggested by Sweeting (2013): (1) start by selecting a short audio text with its written script (e.g. from www.ello.org); (2) analyze the written text to find out difficult words/expressions; (3) get learners to put the MP3 file onto a USB or Ipad; (4) encourage learners to listen to the audio text as many times as possible to become familiar with the speaker's pronunciation, they may listen to it when walking to school, on a bus or a train for about two days; (5) instruct them to focus on particular nuances of the speaker's speech, such as the way the person pronounces certain individual sounds, the rhythm and the pace of the person's voice; (6) discuss the written text and demonstrate how to do shadowing: (6a) play audio text in segments, (6b) simultaneously repeat what the speaker says trying to copy the person's pronunciation with as much precision as possible, it is not a listen-and-repeat exercise, (6c) let students do individual practice with focus on the segments which

they are having problem with; (7) when learners feel that their pronunciation matches the audio text naturally, get them to record themselves using an audio-recording editor, such as audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>) or NCH tool – Record Pad or audioboo or voicethread; (8) tell learners that they should continue the practice outside class. Several studies on shadowing produce positive statements on improving the listening and speaking skills of students from different education levels. Hamada's experiment-based research with 73 Japanese high school first-year students in total examines whether difficult materials can improve learners' listening comprehension skills, two experiments were conducted (Hamada, 2011). This study suggests that shadowing with difficult texts can also develop students' listening comprehension skills, especially the skill to identify the sounds they are listening to. To develop more effective bottom up processing, this skill is crucial. This research raised the possibility that teachers can train students even using difficult texts, such as school textbooks and authentic materials.

Shadowing for lower level students also works. Novitasari (2014) implemented shadowing technique to teach listening skill to Indonesian senior high school students. Although she applied four out of seven steps suggested by Kadota and Tamai (2004) in her study, she found that the technique is effective in improving her students listening skills. She did not describe clearly the materials she used for shadowing but her students found that the materials were not clear enough and too fast. Meanwhile, Wahyuni (2014) in her action research on promoting listening skill in recognizing words through shadowing in her English instruction in junior high school SMP Negeri 1 Rasau West Borneo, Indonesia discovered that her students' listening skills especially in recognizing words

improved significantly despite of the fact she found it was difficult controlling her students while shadowing in class. Exploring the attitudes of the students towards shadowing at their out class time would be interesting.

RESEARCH METHOD

Forty three students in two small classes from the Business Administration Study Program of an Indonesian Polytechnic participated in this study. They were joining Secretarial English course for one semester (18 weeks with 270 minutes each week). One of the learning objectives is the students should be able to carry out simple business transactions and receptionist tasks. There are listening materials in each of the 10 units; the materials are intended to be the model of conversations. The students in groups were expected to carry out their own conversations on each unit. They performed listening as acquisition; that is listening texts are used as the basis for

speaking activities, making use of noticing activities and restructuring activities (Richards 2008). Linking listening tasks to speaking tasks in this way provides opportunities for students to notice how language is used in different communication context. They can then practice using some of the language that occurred in the listening texts (Richards, 2008).

In the first meeting, the students were asked to discuss the importance of listening to improve their speaking skills. This activity was intended to promote their awareness that listening is a crucial activity to improve their speaking. In the second week of the second semester of the Secretarial English instruction (February – July 2014) the students were trained on how to do listening activities through shadowing for their autonomous learning. This study applied shadowing technique which is adopted from Kadota and Tamai (2004) and Kurata (2007) as cited in Hamada (2011). Table 1 shows the procedure.

Table 1. Suggested Procedure of listening activity for autonomous learning

Procedure	Details	Instruction to the students
Listening to the audio	The students listen to the audio to get the general view of the audio text.	Listen to the audio twice.
Reading	The students read the script and try to understand it, and also do the exercises.	Read the script and understand it. Do the exercises; they will help you understand the text. Consult your dictionary if you need.
Silent shadowing while reading	The students do full shadowing in the head, sub-vocalization while reading.	Listen while you read silently the text.
Silent shadowing	The students do full shadowing in the head, sub-vocalization	Listen to the text without reading it. In this step you are listening with understanding. Try to enjoy your listening activity.
Synchronized reading	The students shadow the audio, reading aloud the script, simulating every sound and intonation.	Take the script and read it while you are listening to it. (It must be done only when you have understood the text)
Prosody shadowing	The students try to shadow as they do in synchronized reading without a script.	Listen and repeat (shadow); use play and pause buttons. (If the text is a conversation text take one role, respond to the other speaker by pausing the conversation.) Do it as often as you can.
Listening for fun	The students listen to the audio to enjoy.	Listen to the text while you are doing another activity like when you are listening to a song or when you are going to bed. Set it in repeated playing mode. Listen to

the text as often as you like.

Monitoring on the students' listening activity was done every time there was a class session. It was done by asking them whether they listened to the listening material and how many times. The students' speaking performances at the end of each unit were also used as monitoring.

The instrument for collecting data was an open-ended questionnaire which was given at the end of the semester. The questions were about how the students did listening activity in their out of class time and their suggestions on improving their motivation to be self-directed learners i.e. in listening. They were allowed to answer in Indonesian or in English. To present in this paper the researchers made them in English.

The students' answers were categorized and presented in percentages.

Findings

This study reports how the students in a Secretarial English course at carry out listening tasks and also describes their attitudes toward the acquisition of listening skills. There were 43 students from two different small classes in the Business Administration Study Program answered the questionnaire. The students' answers are elaborated in this section.

Question 1: Student's opinion on using smart phone to do listening activity

The students gave some positive answers. They indicated that using a smart phone to do listening activities was a good idea, beneficial, handy, and helpful.

Question 2: Student's opinion on obligation of listening as their out of class activity

The answers were varied and they could be grouped into either agree or disagree. There was only one student (2.3%) who disagreed; 97.7% respondents agreed on having listening activities as one of their

obligations. The comment of disagreement was "I don't agree. I used to listen just a few minutes before the class began."

Question 3: Student's intention to do listening as their out of class activity

More than one third of students did not have an intention to do listening as their out of class activity. Only about one third of the students have an intention to do listening as their out of class activity. Almost one third of the students answered that they will do listening under certain conditions. The conditions stated by 30.2% respondents were:

- R3 : Yes I do, when I am not reluctant, not tired and not busy.
- R5 : Yes I do. A night before my English class I usually do listening activities but sometimes I forget to do it.
- R10: It depends on whether there are other assignments or not. When there is not any assignment I do listening activities.
- R13: It depends on my mood or needs.
- R16: It depends on the situation. When the situation is not conducive I cannot do listening activities.
- R18: Sometimes I do listening activities. It depends on my mood but sometimes the listening material automatically comes in to my playlist on my smart phone.
- R20: No, I do not. But sometimes I do it when the teacher informs what topic is going to be discussed in the next meeting.
- R25, 26, 34: Yes I do it when I have time.
- R36: I do not do listening the day when there is not any English lesson.
- R41: I do listening in my spare time when there are not any assignments.
- R43: Yes I do. I do listening more frequently when the teacher gives instructions to the class.

Question 4: The student attitudes toward the acquisition of listening skills

The study found that none of the students did listening activities with the seven steps suggested. Even 14% of students did not do initial listening. Only 23.3% students tried to understand the written text after doing initial listening. Very few students (16.3%) did silent shadowing while reading and only about a quarter did Synchronized reading. Most of the 72.1% felt reluctant prosody shadowing. Also, only 7% were

interested in treating the listening materials for fun. No one did silent shadowing. However, some (9.3%) students who were interested in improving their pronunciation found that a creative way was writing the phonetic transcription of the difficult words. The phonetic transcription they wrote was not the phonetic symbol found in a standard dictionary, but they used the normal alphabet. Some students ended their listening activity with reading aloud.

Table 2. Students' preferences in shadowing

Procedure	Frequency	Percent
Listening to the audio	37	86.0
Reading	10	23.3
Silent shadowing while reading	7	16.3
Silent shadowing	0	0
Synchronized reading	11	25.6
Prosody shadowing	12	27.9
Listening for fun	3	7.0

This study also finds that the students' attitudes in carrying out listening at their out of class time do not build the same patterns; there are 21 different patterns. Almost 40% of students enjoyed one kind of activity or one step; and their favorite is listening to the audio (initial listening). There is one student who practiced shadowing (synchronized reading) and there is one who did not do any listening at all. From the interview, it was found that he had a problem with his smart phone, the MP3 application did not work; therefore he only read the script.

About one third of the students applied two steps in their listening activities. There are seven combination types that were applied and many of them include shadowing. The favorite combinations are listening to the audio and prosody shadowing (9.3%) and listening to the audio and reading (7%). All 23.3% who employed three steps in their listening activities started with initial listening and were interested in including shadowing activity. About 44.1% did not include shadowing in

their listening while 55.9% included shadowing.

Question 5: Students' opinion on the advantages of doing listening activity

Most students stated that doing listening activity improves their pronunciation (90.7%); more than half affirmed that it improved their listening skills (55.8%); and almost half of the students admitted that it enriched their vocabulary (46.5%). By doing listening activities, they also think that it:

- increases their knowledge
- motivates them to speak English
- enables them to identify syllable stress in a word
- enables them to identify English rhythm and accent
- helps them understand teacher's English talk
- improves their ability to speak English
- trains their tongue to speak English
- increases their self-confidence being in English class, to speak English, to read a text
- improves their fluency in reading

j. makes them feel proud because they can help their friends

Question 6: Students' suggestions to motivate them doing listening activity

Students were very enthusiastic in giving their suggestions to encourage them doing listening activities. Their suggestions can be summarized into five: giving rewards and punishments, administering tests, providing a variety of enjoyable listening materials and checking techniques, and involving peers in checking pronunciation).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The students commented positively on the listening activities in the secretarial English course. In addition, they admitted that they rarely had listening activities in their previous English courses – except listening to their English teachers during the class sessions. They also declared that they got plentiful advantages by doing out of class listening; most students (90.7%) found improvement of pronunciation. This addresses one of their learning needs which were detected by Rini et.al (2013) and Suroso (2014) in previous studies on error analysis for polytechnic students' oral presentation. The studies found that the students commonly made not only grammar errors in their oral presentations but also pronunciation errors. Frequent errors (+80%) that appeared are omission of some required elements and selection of incorrect elements. For example, sound /t/ after consonant sound /n/ like in words want, isn't, doesn't, don't; sound /k/ after consonant sound /n/ like in word bank; sound /k/ after consonant sound /s/ like in words ask and task.

Despite the fact that they were really aware that they got numerous advantages from listening, they were not motivated enough to do out of class listening. Even though they agreed to make it a compulsory activity; the students wanted to do out of class listening with extensive teachers' control, even peers' control. It is

revealed by the students' suggestions to the teachers to motivate them doing listening activity - giving rewards and punishments, administering tests, providing various and fun listening materials and checking techniques, and involving peer in checking pronunciation. It shows that the students have a low level of self directed learning. This finding confirms Lengkanawati (1997 in Lengkanawati, 2014) in statement that in the Indonesian school context, students will study only when they are told to do so for the exams and is also consistent with the findings of Sunarsih (2010) that often students do not take notes, do not prepare for the upcoming lesson, do not review the past lessons, and do the tasks on the last day of submission. It was also detected that the students worry if the teachers do not control out of class listening activities, only very few students will complete the task.

After being trained on how to do listening activities through shadowing, in fact none of the students was interested in applying the steps suggested as a whole. They only did it partially. More than a quarter did initial listening only; they mainly listen to each listening text for about one to six times. Only about a quarter of them are interested in understanding the script, doing synchronized reading and prosody shadowing. Instead of applying the suggested steps as a whole, the students tend to do no more than three steps; there are only a few students who employ four or five steps. From the interview they said that they did not remember all of the seven steps. It can be understood that the suggested seven steps is too many for the students to remember. In addition, the training on how to do shadowing was only conducted one time and it was probably not enough. As suggested by Thornton (2013, p.63) - 'To be successful, learners need some kind of training or preparation as they embark on self-directed learning, and that teachers are ideally placed to help

learners develop the necessary skills'-giving adequate training on how to shadow is necessary. The fact that more than 50% involved one kind of shadowing activities is a significant finding and it can be boosted by conducting more training. Although the students did not feel that they listened enough, they stated they got extensive benefits from what they had done so far. From the fact that the students are able to identify their learning improvement, it can be assumed that their awareness on the usefulness of listening increased. Listening should be a central focus. It goes with Morley's (2001) argument that skill building in listening is not something that can be accomplished in a short time, in class, in a language lab; listening is the language skill which is used most in life – on average we listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read, and five times more than we write (Rivers 1981 and Weaver 1972 in Morley 2001). Having that awareness is a good start for them to set their learning strategies in joining the English instructions that follows in semester 3, 4 and 5. Their awareness can also be seen from their agreement that out of class listening activities should be one of the English tasks with more teacher and peer control. The suggestions given by the students to control listening activities are worth taking into account. It argues Pollard's finding (2015, p.26) of his study entitled *Web-based journals in the classroom: motivation and autonomous learning*, that 'the participants claim to be motivated to take control of their own learning with Lang-8, perhaps they are not 'ready' to be released from the watchful eye of their teacher.'

CONCLUSION

This study discusses how the students carry out listening tasks and their attitudes toward the acquisition of listening skills. Although the steps of shadowing for out class activity offered in this study were

too many for the students to carry out, in fact the practice helped students gain awareness of their main learning needs through listening to improve speaking skills. An awareness of needs is essential for learning success. Students' needs awareness can be recognized from their capability in identifying numerous advantages of practicing listening activities and their enthusiasm in giving suggestions to practice listening in out of class time. Their suggestions which can be categorized as giving rewards and punishments, administering tests, providing various and fun listening materials and checking techniques, and involving peers in checking pronunciation highlight the students' call for more teacher engagement to encourage them to do out of class listening.

This study also notices students' preferences in practicing listening; most employed one, two or three steps. Most include initial listening, reading and one of the types of shadowing - silent shadowing with reading or synchronized shadowing or prosody shadowing. No students were interested in doing silent shadowing.

It seems that including shadowing as an out of class activity would be much more beneficial to improve students' listening and speaking skills if they experience enough in class training on how to employ shadowing. Lack of training on how to shadow is the limitation of this study. Therefore, incorporating shadowing in the classroom for some weeks to make the students get used to it is likely to be worthwhile. Finally, possible further studies are repeating the study with a different group involving enough training and study on the effectiveness of shadowing with fewer steps (three to four) of shadowing done in class or out of class time.

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