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Vol 1	Nomor 1	Halaman 1-98	Juli 2018	ISSN 2622-478X
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LISTENING STRATEGIES INTRODUCED AT A LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

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Abstract

This study looked at the listening strategies introduced. The object of the study was seven classes of English for Adults (EA) of various levels at LBPP-LIA Kalimalang, Jakarta. The sources of data comprised the activities in the classrooms during a listening session which included the spoken exchanges between all participants (students and the teachers). Data collection consisted of audio-recording of the spoken exchanges and note taking of all observed activities during the listening session. The analysis on the listening strategies introduced in the seven observed classes was carried out using Vandergrift's (Flowerdew and Miller: 2005) classification of listening strategies.

It was found that the dominance of listening strategy used was Double-Check Monitoring (33.98%). It was followed by Direct Attention, Selective Attention, and Extralinguistic Inferencing as the second most frequently introduced (11.65%). Cooperation was the third (9.7%). The fourth was Self-Management and Auditory Monitoring (5.83%) respectively. Linguistic Inferencing and Inferencing between Parts took the fifth (1.94%). The least introduced listening strategies were Creative Elaboration and Summarization (0.97%) for each. In other words, the percentage of Vandergrift's listening strategy which are classified into Metacognitive, Cognitive and Socioaffective strategies were 86.94%, 21.35% and 9.7% respectively. The observed strategies were introduced by the teachers to get immediate feedback on the students' comprehension, to help the students understand the listening materials, and to motivate the students to listen. The teachers seemed to be aware that to introduce listening strategies was necessary to facilitate the students' listening to achieve comprehension. However, the ways the teachers introduced the listening strategies could have been more varied in order to maintain the students' interest and participation.

Keywords: listening strategies and students' comprehension

I. Introduction

1. Background

Information is one of the many factors which people need to have in order to achieve success in every field of work. Accurate and actual information will be worthy of guidance to reach success. There are many ways for people to get such information, one of them is by listening to spoken sources of the information.

Listening is a skill or an ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Goh (2003) says that listening is a mental process which requires listeners their attention, perception to understand, and memory to keep information. To perceive the information conveyed by a speaker, the listeners employ their linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge (Nation and Newton: 2009,

Goh: 2003, Hedge: 2002). When a listener simply uses her/his linguistic knowledge such as auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, propositional, and pragmatic to interpret a message while listening, the listener is called implementing bottom-up listening process (Field: 2003). Conversely, when this listener uses her/his non-linguistic/prior knowledge (schema) of the content as well as context of communication to understand the information conveyed by a speaker, she/he is employing top-down listening process (Goh: 2003, Hedge: 2002, Buck: 2001). Interestingly, effective listening comprehension can only be achieved if the listening activity is carried out with the implementation of the two processes: bottom-up and top-down (Goh: 2003). However, not all listeners, particularly the students learning a foreign language such as English, have equal and sufficient

linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to interpret the information. Consequently, the processes to comprehend the information: perceiving, parsing, and inferring by listening may not always be easy for them to undergo, and may become one of the factors that make listening difficult.

With regard to the factors which make listening difficult for the students, Brown (2000: 252-254) points out another factor, the characteristics of spoken language. There are eight characteristics of spoken language, namely (1) clustering, the way people break down their sentences into small group of words or clauses in a conversational situation, (2) redundancy, the process of rephrasing, repetition, elaboration, and little insertion of sentence or phrase in a conversation., for example “*I mean*” and “*You know.*” The students might not be familiar with the redundancy, (3) reduced forms, for examples, “*Djeetyet?*” for “*Did you eat yet?*”, (4) performance variables, such as hesitation, false starts, pause and corrections. They take place in unplanned discourse, and are potential to disturb students’ comprehension, (5) colloquial language, the informal speech, for example idiomatic expression or slang that can lead the students to misinterpretation, (6) rate of delivery, the number and length of paused used by native speakers to deliver the language, and cannot be easily identified by the students, (7) stress, rhythm, and intonation or the prosodic features of the English language to comprehend a message, (8) interaction, the collaborative exchanges of thought between a hearer and a speaker which involves negotiation, clarification, attending signal, turn-taking, and topic nomination, maintenance, and termination.

To help students facing factors that make the process of listening difficult, a teacher usually provides the students with listening tasks in which the students listen to a listening material through a tape recorder. A tape recorder is a practical tool that can be carried and reused for different classes. A teacher can

bring different kinds of spoken language into the classrooms and repeat them whenever the students need to listen to a monolog or dialog for several times. However, the students may not understand what a speaker says while listening to a long listening material. Harmer (2003: 98) said that:

“Long tapes on subjects which students are not interested in at all will not only be demotivating, but students might well ‘switch off’- and once they do that it becomes difficult for them to tune back into the tape. Comprehension is lost and listening becomes valueless.”

To anticipate all consequences caused by the use of a tape recorder mentioned above, a teacher should consider and introduce the students strategies to listen in order to achieve comprehension. According to Hinkel (2006:119),

“..... strategies are learners’ conscious control, and listeners can be taught to compensate for incomplete understanding, missed linguistic or schematic input, or misidentified clues.”

The findings of a study on the use of Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies conducted by O’Malley (1987) showed that the students who were grouped to employ the two listening strategies performed significantly better on some of their daily tests compared with a control group who was not taught any strategies at all. By the use of listening strategies, the students will be helped to undergo the listening process in order to achieve comprehension. This study aims to look at the listening strategies introduced in General English for Adults program at Lembaga Bahasa Pendidikan Profesional /LBPP-LIA. As one of the prominent English learning institution in Indonesia. This study will

look at one branch only: LBPP-LIA Kalimalang Jakarta.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Listening as an Active Process

Listening as one of the four basic skills taught in language learning is not a passive process. Goh (2003) says that listening is a mental process in which linguistic and non-linguistic information are processed through a number of cognitive systems: attention, perception, and memory. A student listening to a lecture or news, for example, is paying attention to and trying to perceive information that a teacher or an anchor is informing. He will keep the information in his memory before using them for certain purposes. When the student is paying attention and trying to perceive the information, he is actively processing the information by the use of his own linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Nation and Newton involve interaction of participants in a process of listening. They state that (2009:39):

“.....listening is much more active and interpretive process in which the message is not fixed but is created in the interactional space between participants.”

The definition suggests that the process to create a message by participants involved in an interaction is the core of the active process of the listening. The two experts identify two types of the listening process: bottom up and top down processes. A student using bottom up process when listening will assemble messages piece-by-piece from a speech stream to larger levels: auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, propositional, pragmatic and interpretive. The processes involved here are perceiving and parsing the speech stream. On the contrary, a student employing top-down process will get involved in going the messages from the whole to the parts. The whole here is the student's prior knowledge of the content (schema) as well as context of communication used to predict what the

coming message will contain. Then the student will use the messages that he/she listens to confirm, to correct or to add his/her prior knowledge. The process involved is inferencing (Nation and Newton: 2009, Field: 2003).

Almost in line with Nation and Newton, Buck (2001) adds that when the student is implementing the top-down listening process, various knowledge may be involved and can be used to interpret any coming message since they are all capable of interacting and influencing each other. Rivers (1981; 160-161) involves intention of a speaker for the listeners to interpret the message. She says that:

“In order to comprehend the sound falling on our ears, we take the raw material of words, arrangement of words, and the rise and fall of voice to create a significance. The significance which comes from the listeners' side depends on three factors. They are (1) linguistic factors, (2) situational context, and (3) intention of the speakers”.

In other words, when doing listening, a listener is actively processing the information that he/she is listening to by employing his/her linguistic and non-linguistic resources. However, not all listeners, particularly the students learning how to listen to English, have similar and sufficient linguistic and non-linguistic resources. As the consequence, the students will encounter problems to interpret messages when listening. The following is factors that influence the students listening.

2.2 Listening Strategies

There are many listening strategies suggested by some experts that can be introduced in a classroom. This study adopts Vandergrift's listening strategies (Flowerdew and Miller: 2005) to analyze the observation and audio-recording data of the seven observed classes.

Vandergrift's listening strategies have three classifications: Metacognitive, Cognitive, and Socioaffective strategies. Each classification consists of a few subdivisions. Vandergrift's strategies were used as each sub-division of the listening strategies has its own clear and various procedures compared with other's listening strategies. The activities embedded in Vandergrift's are varied and easy to be carried out in the classroom. Each listening strategy leads students to be creative in achieving comprehension. The students will be more likely motivated to listen to listening materials during the listening session. Figure below shows Vandergrift's listening strategies (Flowerdew and Miller 2005:72).

I.	<p>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</p> <p><u>a. Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced Organization - Direct attention - Selective attention - Self-management <p><u>b. Monitoring</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive monitoring - Auditory monitoring - Double-check monitoring <p><u>c. Evaluation</u></p>
II.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance evaluation - Problem identification <p>COGNITIVE STRATEGIES</p> <p><u>a. Inferencing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linguistic inferencing - Voice inferencing - Paralinguistic or kinesic inferencing - Extralinguistic inferencing - Inferencing between parts <p><u>b. Elaboration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal elaboration - World elaboration - Academic elaboration - Questioning elaboration - Creative elaboration - Imaginary <p><u>c. Summarization</u></p> <p><u>d. Translation</u></p>
III.	<p><u>e. Transfer</u></p> <p><u>f. Repetition</u></p> <p><u>g. Resourcing</u></p> <p><u>h. Grouping</u></p> <p><u>i. Note taking</u></p> <p><u>j. Deduction/induction</u></p> <p><u>k. Substitution</u></p> <p>SOCIOAFFECTIVE STRATEGIES</p> <p><u>a. Questioning for clarification</u></p> <p><u>b. Cooperative</u></p> <p><u>c. Lowering anxiety</u></p> <p><u>d. Self-encouragement</u></p> <p><u>e. Taking emotional temperature</u></p>

3. Method

This study intends to identify and analyze the listening strategies introduced at LBPP-LIA. The data were collected by conducting class observation. Information about classroom activities was collected through audio-recording of the spoken exchanges. Notes were taken to record all tasks carried out by the students, and activities done by both teachers and the students taken place during the listening to the exercises.

All the spoken exchanges between the teacher and the students taken place during listening to the exercises were recorded, transcribed, separated and interpreted. The interpretation of the oral exchanges together with the identified tasks and activities were typed, listed and matched with Vandergrift’s listening strategies (Flowerdew and Miller 2005 : 72).

The object of the study was seven classes of the English for Adults (EA), one of the several general English programs offered by Lembaga Bahasa dan Pendidikan Profesional (LBPP-LIA) in Kalimalang. The program is designed for adult learners (senior high school and college students, graduates, job seekers, etc). EA has three proficiency phases: Elementary, Intermediate, and High Intermediate. Each phase consists of four quarterly levels for a one-year time span. The seven classes chosen for the object of this study were two classes of Elementary 3, one class of Elementary 4, two classes of Intermediate 1, one class of Intermediate 4, one class of High Intermediate 4. Each class consisted of fifteen to twenty five students and was taught by a different teacher.

4. Findings

The following table shows the total frequencies and percentages of the listening strategies introduced by teachers in all seven observed classes.

Table Total frequencies and percentages of listening strategies introduced in all seven observed classes.

No	Listening strategies	Frequency	Percentage
I.	Metacognitive strategies		
	a. Planning	12	11.65%
	- Direct attention	12	11.65%
	- Selective attention	6	5.83%
	- Self-management		
b. Monitoring		6	5.83%
	- Auditory monitoring	35	33.98%
II.	- Double-check monitoring	2	1.94%
	Cognitive strategies	12	11.65%
	a. Inferencing	2	1.94%
	- Linguistic inferencing	1	0.97%
	- Extralinguistic inferencing	1	0.97%
		2	1.94%

III.	- Inferencing between parts	2	1.94%
	b. Elaboration	10	9.7%
	- Creative elaboration		
	c. Summarization		
	g. Resourcing		
Socioaffective strategies	i. Note taking		
	b. Cooperation		
Total		103	100%

From the figures in the table above, we can see the dominance of Double-Check Monitoring (33.98%). It was followed by Direct Attention, Selective Attention, and Extralinguistic Inferencing as the second most frequently introduced (11.65%). Cooperation was the third (9.7%). The fourth is Self-Management and Auditory Monitoring (5.83%) respectively. Linguistic Inferencing and Inferencing between Parts took the fifth (1.94%). The least introduced listening strategies were Creative Elaboration and Summarization (0.97%) for each. In other words, the percentage of Vandergrift’s listening strategy which are classified into Metacognitive, Cognitive and Socioaffective strategies were 86.94%, 21.35% and 9.7% respectively.

5.1 Conclusions

The teachers in the seven observed classes introduced some of Vandergrift’s listening strategies. Double-check Monitoring was the most frequently introduced strategy. This strategy was usually introduced as the last strategy or after the teachers introduced several strategies for listening to the topics. The use of Double-check monitoring, as the name implied, was probably to check the students’ comprehension. The teachers might have wanted to have immediate feedback on the effectiveness of the listening strategies they had previously introduced. Double-check Monitoring also helps the students to negotiate the meaning of the spoken language before they arrive at the comprehension since the students are given a chance to revise their previous perception of the message they have just listened.

The second most frequently introduced strategies were Direct Attention, Selective Attention and Extralinguistic Inferencing. The use of Direct Attention and Selective Attention seems to be related to the general objective of the lessons taught in the English for Adults at LBPP-LIA: to understand the topic. In order to understand the topic of the listening materials, which the two strategies can facilitate, the students should be able to find the main ideas and specific information. The procedure of Direct Attention and Selective Attention introduced in the seven observed classes were exactly as suggested by Vandergrift (2007).

However, Extralinguistic Inferencing was introduced by following a slightly different procedure compared with Vandergrift's. The teachers in the six classes directed the students' attention on the questions in their exercise books by reading out the questions. Vandergrift recommends directing students' attention to the clues by writing the clues on the board before the students guess the answers after listening. The clues on the board can be expected to take more the students' attention rather the questions written on the Student Book. This technique will benefit both the teachers and the students. Firstly, it is more likely that the students will pay attention to short clues written on the board by the teacher than to questions in their book read out loud by the teacher, and the clues will keep them focus on the listening materials. Secondly, the teachers, instead of reading the instructions in the Student Book, might have varied their techniques to teach the students strategies for listening, therefore, the students would experience different techniques for listening, and they would not feel bored.

Other introduced listening strategies carried out were Inferencing between Parts, and Summarization. The way the teachers introduced the two listening strategies was almost in line with Vandergrift's. However, the teacher in class B skipped one step of Inferencing between Parts: the teacher tells students that previous information in the listening may help students understand the listening passage better. Teacher B might have thought that to tell the students the benefit of the previous information would not give the students any significant result, since the students did not read any listening passage, and would still need to listen to similar topics during the listening session. The teacher, then, asked the students to make use of words which

are not related to the listening task in order to get more information about the task (Flowerdew and Miller:2005). What the teacher had done to teach the students listening was not bad at all. Summarization was almost carried out the same way with Vandergrift's. Teacher E assigned students to listen to a dialog then asked them to arrange sentences written on the exercise book into a flow of a folktale.

However, the teachers need to teach the students listening strategies by giving them information what strategies they are using and why such strategies are important. Because if the students are familiar with various listening strategies, and know the reasons why they carry out different strategies for listening, they will be more motivated. They can introduce the strategies on their own initiative while practicing their listening skill in pairs/groups outside the classroom.

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