



Adversities and Challenges on Listening and Speaking Learning of the English Language Students

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the adversities and challenges on students' listening and speaking learning. Thirty college students were involved in this study by distributing a questionnaire consisting of ten questions relating to their adversity and challenges in listening and speaking learning. Findings from this study indicate that the students confront some adversities. Being afraid to make mistakes and lacking vocabulary when speaking and listening are the most suggested to be the adversities. Building self-confidence is the best strategy to develop listening and speaking skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Universities are paying more attention to writing, reading, and vocabulary rather than listening and speaking, whereas listening is one of the essential skills in English language learning. Hamouda (2013) said that listening skill is crucial in acquiring comprehensible input. Education does not occur if there is not any input. Furthermore, Ur (1996) considered that among four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking skill is the most significant one.

The statements about the importance of listening and speaking convince us that EFL learners may have some adversities and challenges during the learning process, either it is from themselves, subjects, lecturers and other factors. Researchers conducted the study to find out which aspect that the college students encountered the most, and what college students should do or implement to overcome their adversities or difficulties in listening and speaking.

The previous studies have also studied and examined the adversities and

challenges that often encountered by the college students in EFL countries. Musliadi (2016) found that there are some challenges of teaching and learning speaking at the advanced level of foreign language proficiency. Dina & Gadeer (2014) dealt with describing adversities that may be encountered in an EFL setting. Due to the previous studies, researchers were dealing with the same case to find out the similarity or difference in finding.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Hamouda (2013), EFL learners have faced crucial problems in listening comprehension because the universities pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Besides Hamouda's statements about fundamental issues in listening, there are more statements from other studies about the same case, such as follows:

a. Cultural Differences

Learners should be familiar with the cultural knowledge of language; if the listening task involves completely different cultural materials, then the learners may have critical challenges in their comprehension. It is the responsibility of teachers to give background knowledge about the listening activities in advance (Azmi, Celik, Yidliz, & Tugrul, 2014).

b. Accent

Goh (1999) in his studied found out that 66% of learners mentioned a speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. Buck (2001) indicated that when listeners hear an unfamiliar accent such as Indian English for the first time after studying only American English will encounter critical challenges in listening.

Both experts are trying to state that strange accent may hamper student's listening comprehension ability, there some differences in stress, pronunciation and so on for each articulation. If the students are odd with the particular accent, they may not be able to comprehend what the speakers said.

c. Unfamiliar Vocabulary

According to Azmi Bingol, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart (2014), when the listening texts contain the known words, it would be effortless for students to understand them. But as always, there is not easy when the native speakers give information. Sometimes, there are some words that cannot be understood quickly

due to the students' vocabulary limitation.

d. Length and Speed of Listening

According to Underwood (1989), there are some barriers to efficient, listening comprehension process. First, listeners cannot control the speed of speech. Second, listeners cannot have words repeated, and this can cause critical adversities for them. Third, listeners do not have high vocabulary knowledge. Fourth, listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Graham (2006) said that there are some other factors that cause learners' listening comprehension adversities such as restricted vocabulary, poor grammar, and misinterpretations about listening tasks. According to Seferoglu and Uzakgoren (2004), some other listening comprehension adversities are related to the kind of listening materials.

Based on the statements from Underwood (1989), Graham (2006), Seferoglu and Uzakgoren (2004), researchers believe that every adversities and challenges that may be encountered by college students are coming from the curriculum, teachers or lecturers, and their own self. Besides that, all those statements have covered all adversities and challenges that are often found in the previous studies. On the other hand, Ur (1996) mentioned that there are many factors causing the adversities in speaking, such as 1. Inhibition. It means that making mistakes fearful of criticism or merely shy makes the students worried to converse. 2. Nothing to say. Students have no motive to express themselves. 3. Low or uneven participation. In large classes, only one participant can talk at a time. It tends that some learners dominate, while others speak very little or not at all. 4. Mother-tongue use. The learners with the same mother tongue tend to use it. It makes them easier to communicate and, the learners feel less exposed if they are speaking using their mother tongue.

Psychological factors may also hinder the college students from practicing their speaking in English class. Each of them is explained below:

a. Fear of Mistake

He and Chen (2010) demonstrated that the students are worried to make mistakes. They are afraid that their classmates will laugh at them when they make mistakes. They assumed that they would receive negative evaluations from their peers if they make a mistake in speaking English. Middleton (2009) said that most EFL students are afraid to try and to speak in a foreign language they learn. In this context, as he adds, the students do not want to look foolish in front of the class.

b. Shyness

Baldwin (2011) further explains that speaking in front of people is one of the more common phobias that students encounter and feeling of shyness makes their mind go blank or that they will forget what to say. Bowen (2005) and Robby (2010) argue that some shy learners are caused by their nature that they are very quiet. Saurik (2011) identifies that most of English students are reluctant to speak the language. They think they will make mistakes when they talk.

c. Lack of Confidence

Tsui cited Nunan (1999) says those students who lack confidence in themselves and their English necessarily suffer from communication apprehension. The other cause of students' lack of confidence also deals with the lack of encouragement from the teacher (Brown, 2001). He and Chen (2010) state the main cause of students' confidence is their low ability in speaking English.

d. Anxiety

The afraid of being evaluated by their teachers is also another factor affecting students' anxiety.

e. Lack of Motivation

Babu (2010) argues that lack of motivation in learning causes students' hesitation to speak English in the classroom. Aftat (2008) believes that motivation is a product of good teaching. In his further explanation, Aftat (2008) emphasizes that to motivate students to learn well and actively communicate in English, teachers should have passion, creativity, and interest in their students. These adversities and challenges with student's listening and speaking ability gave us a visualization which problem or obstacle that may appear in our study. And from this study, we hope that we could arrange the level of most appeared adversity on samples taken. Through this study, the students are able to know what they should do to overcome their own adversities, or they could ask their friends who have the same problems then ask their lecturers for advice or strategies for listening and speaking.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers followed the analytical, descriptive method in the study;

Population

The study was conducted by examining the college students in English and

Literature Department, Universitas Negeri Medan for the academic year 2017/2018. The analysis and discussion were elaborated by the descriptive method and supported by the graphic.

Sample

Random samples were taken from the population of study, consisting of thirty (30) college students who studied Basic Listening and Speaking for Informal Information.

Instrument of Research

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to random samples about the adversities choices that may be encountered by them. The surveys were divided into 3 sections such as adversity in listening, speaking, and both. The reviews must be filled based on their experience and truth, and then the polls were analyzed to find out the significant difficulty among others.

The limitation of The Study

The study was applied to the freshmen of the academic year 2017/2018 conducted in English and Literature Department, Universitas Negeri Medan. The study only focused on and dealt with speaking and listening adversities among college students for academic year 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There were ten statements which covered the speaking and listening difficulties among college students. These were presented clearly below.

Table. 1. Participants' responses rate on the listening and speaking difficulties

Statement	Frequency					Responses						
	A	B	C	D	E	Total	Percentage 100%					Total
							A	B	C	D	E	
1	4	19	4	3	0	30	13.3	63.3	13.3	10.0	0	100
2	23	5	2	0	0	30	76.7	16.7	6.7	0.0	0	100
3	16	8	5	1	0	30	53.3	26.7	16.7	3.3	0	100
4	23	2	4	1	0	30	76.7	6.7	13.3	3.3	0	100
5	15	9	3	3	0	30	50.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	0	100
6	23	0	7	0	0	30	76.7	0.0	23.3	0.0	0	100
7	20	9	1	0	0	30	66.7	30.0	3.3	0.0	0	100
8	21	1	8	0	0	30	70.0	3.3	26.7	0.0	0	100
9	15	5	10	0	0	30	50.0	16.7	33.3	0.0	0	100
10	26	0	4	0	0	30	86.7	0.0	13.3	0.0	0	100

The descriptive statistics on the participants' responses on the listening and speaking difficulties was briefly explained below.

1. 19 out of 30 students (63.3%) choose grammar as their significant adversity in English speaking, as shown the following figure.

2. 23 out of 30 students (76.7%) assume that TV, radio and, documentaries on the internet are the useful method to improve their listening and speaking skills, as can described below.
3. 16/30 students agree that listening to a group family word is an excellent method to enhance their listening and speaking skills, as can be seen below.
4. 23/30 students assume that listening and repeating is a unique strategy to improve their listening and speaking skills.
5. 15/30 students doing the listening task as their suggest strategy to develop their listening and speaking skills.
6. 23/30 students agree that being confidence is a good strategy to improve listening and speaking skills.
7. 20/30 students use American as their English accent.
8. 21/30 students think grammar is one of the factors of speaking adversity
9. 15/30 students pay attention in their grammar when speaking English
10. 26/30 students believe that the lack of vocabulary is one of the factors in their speaking.

DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire and after comparing the results of questionnaires, then the explanations on Listening and Speaking by expert, the discussion is generated into some essential points, which are:

1. 19 students chose grammar as their significant adversity in English speaking. As we can see that Ur's statement (1996) about the first factor causing adversity in speaking is "inhibition". It is because the students are worried and merely shy to make a mistake when they are speaking.
2. There were 23 students who assumed that TV, radio, and documentaries on the internet are the excellent method to improve their listening and speaking skills. As we know that this era every information can easily to get and people can learn everything without the need to stop by in only one information provider, so it will be an excellent method to improve their listening and speaking skills especially for a shy person.
3. 16 students agreed that listening to a group family word is a superior method to develop their listening and speaking skills. According to AzmiBingol, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart (2014) and in line with Miranty & Rachmawati (2016), sometimes

there are some words that can be understood easily due to the students' vocabulary limitation; with a considerable vocabulary, listeners can easily understand the record of the native speaker.

4. 23 students assumed that listening and repeating are good strategies to improve their listening and speaking skills. According to Underwood (1989), listeners cannot control the speed of speech. Then, listeners cannot have words repeated, and this can cause critical difficulties for them. Based on this statement, we have understood the reason why students are choosing this option.

5. Half of 30 students were doing the listening task as their suggested strategy to improve their listening and speaking skills. They do exercise to improve their listening and speaking skills; it could be a written task or oral task.

6. 23 students agreed that having confidence is a good strategy to improve listening and speaking skills. According to He and Chen (2010) explain that students feel afraid of the idea of making mistakes as they are worried that their friends will laugh at them and receive negative evaluations from their peers if they make a mistake in speaking English. With the good strategy to improve listening and speaking skills, it also boosts the confidence of the students (Rachmawati, 2013).

7. 20 students used American as their English accent. Goh (1999), 66% of learners mentioned a speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. As we can see that American accent is more popular than English accents, mostly music and movies are produced in American and, it was directly using American accent within.

8. 21 students thought grammar is one of the factors of adversity in speaking. He and Chen (2010) stated the main cause of students' confidence is their low ability in speaking English. Their low ability also includes the grammar itself; the grammar has an impact in speaking because it cut down the confidence of students.

9. Half of the students paid attention to their grammar when speaking English. Graham (2006) said that there are some other factors that can cause the learners' listening comprehension problems such as restricted vocabulary, poor grammar, and misinterpretations about listening tasks. This result is same as two previous statements about grammar itself.

10. Most students thought that the lack of vocabulary is one of the factors in their speaking. According to AzmiBingol, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart (2014), when

listening texts contain known words, it would be very easy for students to understand. But as always, there is not consistently easy word when native speakers or records give information. Definitely, the lack of vocabulary can be an obstacle for students to express their thought through some words especially when they have a conversation with a native speaker or an interview.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research was conducted by investigating the thirty (30) college students in English and Literature Department; Universitas Negeri Medan for the academic year 2017/2018 by distributing the questionnaires which were divided into three sections such as adversity in listening, speaking, and both.

Based on the results of the questioners, it can be concluded that most students have adversity and challenges in speaking English because they are afraid to make a mistake especially in grammar, they also do not have much vocabulary to express their thought through speaking and understood when they are listening. This situation to their listening and speaking skills was obstructed by the vocabulary and grammar and also impact to their psychology. They assume that TV, radio, and documentaries on the internet, then listening and repeating are proper methods to improve their listening and speaking skills and having confidence is a good strategy to develop listening and speaking skills.

Suggestion

Students should be more active to study vocabulary and grammar to boost their confidence in listening and speaking skills. But we also need an idea that can be used to help their listening and speaking skills by TV, radio, or documentaries on the internet with audio that can be repeated by the users.

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