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ELT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE BOUNDARIES AND BEYOND

Listening Comprehension Problems at The Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University

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Abstract

This research was aimed to find out the problems and the causes of problems faced by fourth semester students in listening comprehension at English Education Department University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. The qualitative descriptive design was applied in this study. The data were collected from questionnaire and interview. This study used data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing in analyzing data. This study used methodological triangulation to gain the credibility of the study. The result from the students' problems in listening comprehension was divided into three categories. First, listening comprehension problems related to listening material such as unfamiliar words, poor grammar, understand every single word, length of the text, interpreting meaning, fatigue, unfamiliar topic, reduced form and background knowledge. Second, listening comprehension problems related to listener such as understanding listening, anxiety, unclear pronunciation, intonation of speaker, recognize signal, lose focus, unknown word, infer meaning, predict next discussion, memory and misinterpretation task. Last, listening comprehension problems related to physical setting such as bad quality of recording, hesitation & pause, lack of visual support, variety accents, speed of delivery, inability get repeated, and noises. Besides, the causes of problems in listening comprehension such as listening has a complex process, limited time, unclear pronunciation, length of the text, poor of recording, sleepy, noisy, lack of practice and lack of background knowledge. So the researcher hopes the next researcher will perform a better comprehension such as discusses further about the causes of the problems and promoting techniques to solve the listening problems.

Keywords: listening comprehension; listening comprehension problem; English education department

Introduction

Listening and reading are receptive skills. Listening requires a person's ability to accept and comprehend information (Nunan, 2003: 24). Listening occupies the most important place in language skills, especially in the communication process. Renukadevi (2014: 60) stated that, as a percentage of total time spent in communicating, 45% of language competence from listening, 30% from speaking, 15% from reading, and 10% from writing. Because of this percentage, it indicates that listening plays the most crucial role in the communication process.

Although listening occupies the most important place in the communication process, listening also creates many problems. Underwood in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011: 982-984) stated seven

problems in efficient listening comprehension. The difficulties are listeners cannot control the speed of delivery, listeners cannot always have words repeated, listeners have a limited vocabulary, listeners may fail to recognize the signals, listeners may lack contextual knowledge, listening can be difficult for listeners to concentrate in a foreign language, and students may have established certain learning habits such as a wish to understand every word.

Several studies also mentioned further listening problems faced by listeners. Dary (2016) indicated the problems are words and topics unfamiliar, difficulty remembering the words or phrases, difficulty in listening activities without a transcript, unrepeated recorded text, inability to understand speakers' accents and pronunciations, and inability to concentrate, and fear in doing listening. Pratiwi (2017) reported that the dominant problems are 33.3% vocabulary knowledge, 46.67% less of self-confident, 60% less concentration, 46.67% difficult in predicting speaker talk, 60% difficulty in guessing unknown words, 53.3% feeling depression when having a hard time and 53.3% challenging to recognize the main point. Juan (2013) reported that the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary was the most considerable difficulty faced by China's students in Malaysia.

These problems also happen in English Education Department students of University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, especially in Critical listening class. As stated by the lecturer of the Critical Listening subject, some of the students have problems in listening comprehension. There are some students in critical listening lessons with low scores.

Several studies discuss listening skill problems. Pratiwi (2017) focuses on listening in TOEFL section problems, Dary (2016) focuses on listening to short conversation problems, and Juan (2013) focuses on listening comprehension problems of students from china learning English in Malaysia. However, this study will focus on listening comprehension problems at Critical Listening Class (fourth-semester students). Yang (2009: 134) said that Listening comprehension is a complex process that the listener must carry out. The listener must distinguish between speech sounds, comprehend language and syntax, illustrate stress and intonation, store what was collected in all of the above and interpret it within the immediate context of the utterance.

Basically, English Education Department students must be able to master listening. This listening comprehension is beneficial for future students of English education working in an environment that uses English. Analyzing the listening comprehension problems of English Education Department students will make it easier for students to recognize their weaknesses and shortcomings for further improvement.

Based on the description above, the researcher conducted research about the problems and factors that cause problems faced by fourth-semester students in listening comprehension by conducting a research "Listening Comprehension Problems at The Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department at University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa".

Research Methodology

This study used descriptive design by using a qualitative approach. According to Nassaji (2015: 129) defines descriptive design as "the description of a phenomenon and its properties". This study is more interested in what happened than then how or why it happened. The research was conducted at 15 fourth-semester students of English Education Department University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. The subjects in this study were selected using purposive sampling. These fifteen students were selected based on recommendations from the lecturer because they had low scores in listening comprehension at the Critical Listening Lesson. The score is under fifty. Fifteen students consist of five students from class A, five students from class B, and five students from class C of Critical Listening class.

The instruments used to collect the data in this research were questionnaire sheet and interview guideline. The researcher prepared three steps of the questionnaire. The first is about listening comprehension problems in listening material consist of 10 questions. The second is about listening comprehension problems in listeners' factor consist of 15 questions. The last is about listening comprehension problems in a physical setting consist of 10 questions. Meanwhile, the researcher also prepared six questions for each student. For each class, one person was selected to be interviewed. The question contains questions about the cause of problems in listening comprehension related to listening material, listener and physical setting, listening practice, concentration, and listening task. In order to analyze the data the researcher used the theory from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014).

Result and Discussion

Students' Problems in Listening Comprehension

The finding of the first research question is about students' problems in listening comprehension. There were three different questionnaire themes given to students. The first theme asked about listening problems related to listening material consists of 10 questions. The second theme asked about listening problems related to listeners consists of 15 questions. The last theme asked about listening problems related to physical setting consists of 10 questions.

The first factor in listening comprehension problems is listening material. The result shows that all students find difficulty related to interpreting meaning which is 100%. The second problem is student find difficult to understand long text which is 93.3%. The third problem is poor grammar, fatigue and unfamiliar topic which is 86.7%. The fourth problem is understanding every single word which is 80.0 %. The fifth problem is used reduced form and basic background knowledge which is 73.3%. The sixth problem is long conversation which is 60.0%. The seventh problem is unfamiliar word which is 46.7%.

The second factor in listening comprehension problems is the listeners themselves. The result shows that all students find difficulty related to the encountered unknown word, which is 100%. The second problem is the anxiety and intonation of the speaker, which is 93.3%. The third problem is the use of the signal word, infer meaning and recognize words, which is 86.7 %. The fourth problem is the inability to understand listening and predict the next discussion, which is 80.0%. The fifth problem is unclear pronunciation, losing focus, memory, inability to concentrate, and lack of transcript, which is 73.3%. The sixth problem is students find it difficult to answer the question, which is 66.7%. The seventh problem is hearing new words, which is 60.0%.

The third problem related to listening comprehension problems is physical setting. The result shows that all students find difficulty related to various accents and speed of delivery which is 100 %. The second problem is poor equipment which is 93.3%. The third problem is lack of pause, noises and poor quality tapes which is 86.7%. The fourth problem is the poor quality of recording and inability to get repeated which is 80.0 %. The fifth problem is hesitation and pause, lack of visual support which is 66.7 %.

Causes of Problems in Listening Comprehension

The students were given 6 questions related to the problems and the causes faced by students in listening comprehension. The result of the causes problems in listening comprehension faced by fourth semester students are:

Causes of Problems Affecting Listening Comprehension Related to Listener

The cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to listener based on the interview data is different from one respondent to another. They give different responses related to the causes.

The first respondent said that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to the listener is because listening has a complex process. As respondent 1 said:

In listening, I find it difficult to concentrate (p1.1) because we find out the meaning and also pay attention to the spelling of the speakers. When trying to find the meaning but still the point conveyed by the speaker is not digested (c1.1)

Based on the comment given by respondent 1, respondent said that respondent finds difficult in listening activity because listening has a complex process such as understand language meaning, understand accents and conclude the material. As it was stated by Yang (2009: 134) that Listening comprehension is a complex process that the listener must carry out. In which the listener must distinguish between speech sounds, comprehend language and syntax, illustrate stress and intonation, store what was collected in all of the above and interpret it within the immediate context of the utterance.

The second respondent said that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to the listener is because time limitation. As respondent 2 said:

It's hard to catch the speaker's point (p2.1). So, when I was studying, it took me a long time to repeat the sound. It is very time consuming while the learning time is very limited (c2.1).

Based on respondent 2, respondent said that respondent finds difficult in listening activity because of limited time. While many words are difficult to understand and need time to repeat the recording, students need more time to understand listening. Brown and Yule (1983) also stated that listeners required time to comprehend their given information. Then, if the lecturer spoke, pupils needed time to think.

The third respondent said that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to the listener is because of unclear pronunciation. As respondent 3 said:

I find it difficult to understand speaker's words (p2.2) because I cannot clearly hear the speaker's pronunciation (c3.1). It makes me misunderstood the vocabulary conveyed.

Based on interviewee 3, the respondent said that the respondent finds difficulty listening because the respondent can't hear speaker pronunciation clearly and the pronunciation is difficult to understand. It makes respondents misunderstood the vocabulary conveyed. This is in line with the study by Darti (2017: 50). In that study shows that one of the causes of listening comprehension is unclear pronunciation and speed of delivery.

Causes of Problems Affecting Listening Comprehension Related to Listening Material

The causes of problems affecting listening comprehension related to listening material based on the interview data are that all respondents give similar answers. They thought that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to listening material is the length of the text.

Based on respondent 1 the main problem that the respondent faced is understanding speaker speech because of the length of the text. As respondent 1 said:

The material is ok. It just about understands what the speaker speech (p2.3) is difficult because of the long text (c4.1).

It is similar to respondent 2, respondent 2 also finds it difficult because of the length of the text. As respondent 2 said:

I find it difficult if the material uses podcasts (p3.1). If used podcast the material was many and the speaker talks very long (c4.2). So it's hard to understand what the material is about.

Based on the interview respondent 2 said the example of length material comes from a podcast. And it is also similar to respondent 3. As she said:

I often find it difficult if the material uses BBC (p3.2). Because usually, the material is very long (c4.3).

Based on the interview, respondent 3 said the example of length material comes from BBC. It is because in a long text there are many unfamiliar words, grammar structure, there are many words that must be understood and it is difficult to conclude the material. Prepare listening materials that fit

the students' level and need from the very simple texts to the lower level students and moved to the very complicated authentic materials to the advanced students (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016: 1673).

Causes of Problems Affecting Listening Comprehension Related to Physical Setting

The causes of problems affecting listening comprehension related to the physical setting based on the interview data are poor of recording and the speed of delivery. The first respondent said that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to physical setting is because of poor recording. As respondent 1 said:

I have difficulty in hearing speech (p2.4) because sometimes the sound is small (c5.1), even though it's full in but it still doesn't sound clear.

Based on respondent 1, respondent said that the main problem in the physical setting is can't hear the speech clearly because sometimes the sound of the recording is small. Even though the volume has been increased, it sounds become more indistinct. It is in line with the research by Hamouda (2013) that bad quality of the recording, speed of speech, accent, pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration, and anxiety were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners.

The second respondent said that the cause of problems affecting listening comprehension related to physical setting is because of the speed of delivery. As respondent 2 said:

I find it difficult when I listen to the audio that talks too fast (c6.1).

Based on respondent 2, respondent said that that the main problem in the physical setting is can't hear clearly the speech because the speaker conveys the material fast. It is similar with interviewee 3 that the speaker speaks too fast is causes problems in listening comprehension. As respondent 3 said:

I find it difficult in listening when the speaker speaks too fast '(c6.2). It also makes it difficult for me to take notes. Even though note-taking is very important because usually, I forget what the speaker said.

It is in line with the study conducted by Diora & Rosa (2020: 95), they said that the causes come from the speed of delivery and accents of the speaker. It is made almost all of the students found difficult in listening comprehension.

Causes of Problems of Losing Concentration during Listening Comprehension

The causes of problems of losing concentration during listening comprehension based on the interview data are felt sleepy and noisy. The first respondent said that the cause problem of losing concentration during listening comprehension is because felt sleepy. As respondent 1 said:

I often feel sleepy. When listen to long material and can't catch the point that is conveyed, finally I feel sleepy and lose my concentration (c7.1).

Based on respondent 1, respondent said that respondent often sleepy when the speaker talking about the material. When feeling sleepy, then the respondent loses concentration during listening activity. It is similar with respondent 2 that respondent often felt sleepy. As respondent 2 said:

I often feel sleepy (c7.2) when learning listening because my brain is working too hard and I feel tired. That's why I lost my concentration.

It is in line with the previous study conducted by Rahmah (2019: 40), the result of the study shows that problems related to mental condition in listening comprehension, almost all of them found the difficulties in listening comprehension because they feel sleepy and boring.

The third respondent said that the cause problem of lose concentration during listening comprehension is because noisy environment. As respondent 3 said:

I lose concentration when the conditions are not conducive or too noisy (c8.1), because listening requires focus and a quiet environment.

Based on interviewee 3, respondent said that listening requires focus then if the condition is not conducive to interfere with student concentration. It is in line with previous study conducted by Dary (2016: 17). In the research shows that some cause is made some noises which made the sample of the study didn't concentrate well into the listening test.

Causes of Problem in Listening Comprehension Practice

The causes of problems in listening comprehension practice based on the interview data are all respondents give a similar answer. The cause problem in listening comprehension practice is lack of practice.

Based on respondent 1, respondent said that respondent only practice in class. As respondent 1 said:

I only do practice in the class (c9.1), when listening learning takes place

It is similar with respondent 2 that respondent only practices in the class, when outside the classroom respondent just listen to music and watching films. As respondent 2 said:

I only do practice in the class (c9.2). When outside, I only listen to music and watch film in English. It is very rare.

And it is also similar with interviewee 3 the respondent only practices in the class. Outside of class respondent only listens to music and watches YouTube. As respondent 3 said:

For practice, I usually practice in the class (c9.3). Outside of class, I only listen music and watch you tube.

Besides listening comprehension practice is very important for student to get used to pronunciation from native speaker. As Ur (1984: 25) said that listening exercises are most effective if they are constructed round a task. It means that the students are required to do something in response to what they hear that will demonstrate their understanding. As proverb said that practice makes perfect.

Causes of Problem in Completing the Task

The causes of problems in completing the task based on the interview data is all respondents give a similar answer. The cause problem in completing task is lack of background knowledge.

Based on respondent 1, the respondent usually used his background knowledge to complete the task. As respondent 1 said:

I complete the task according to my understanding during the listening activity (c10.1)

It is similar with respondent 2, respondent said that respondent complete the task using her background knowledge. As respondent 2 said:

For the task, the audio practice can be played many times. So I played the audio many times until I could catch the material. If I still can't, I used my own background knowledge (c10.2).

And it is also similar with respondent 3 that they usually use their background knowledge to complete the task. As respondent 3 said:

I complete the task according to my understanding when learning takes place (c10.3). Although sometimes I am confused about what I have heard but I try to solve it

Based on respondent 3, although sometimes confused about what has been heard, the respondent uses his background knowledge to complete the listening task. It is important to increase students' background knowledge in order to complete the task properly. Related to those findings, Bloomfield (2010) said that it demands to provide background knowledge and linguistic knowledge, set the purpose of listening, whether it is general or specific information, and guide the students to respond to the spoken (Samosir, 2019: 105).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to find out the problems faced by fourth semester students in listening comprehension and to find out the causes of problems faced by fourth semester students in listening comprehension related to three categories. It is related to listening material, the listener and the physical setting.

Students' listening comprehension problems related to listening material were Unfamiliar words, poor grammar, understanding every single word, length of the text, interpret meaning, fatigue, unfamiliar topic, reduced form, background knowledge. Students also have problems related to listeners. They were Understanding listening, anxiety, unclear pronunciation, the intonation of the speaker, recognize the signal, lose focus, unknown word, infer meaning, new word, recognize the word, predict next discussion, memory, misinterpretation task, transcript. The last problems in listening comprehension come from physical settings. The problems were Bad quality of recording, hesitation & pause, lack of visual support, variety of accents, speed of delivery, inability to get repeated, noises, poor equipment.

Besides, there were some factors that cause students found problems in listening comprehension. The causes of problems were listening has a complex process, limited time, unclear pronunciation, length of the text, poor of recording, sleepy, noisy, lack of practice and lack of background knowledge.

Suggestion

According to the result of the research, there were some suggestions offered. First, the student needs to exercise more to improve listening comprehension skills. In doing practice, it is not only done in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Many students only listen to music and watch movies for training outside of class. It's time for students to move from their comfort zone to get used to listening to podcasts and so on. Second, the teacher should prepare the students to realize the important of listening skill. The teacher can provide students with different kinds of input such as radio news, TV plays, films, Storytelling, announcements, and so on. Last, the researcher hopes this study is able to give inspiration and guidance for the next researcher to be more careful while doing similar research. Therefore, the next researcher will perform a better comprehension than this research such as discusses further about the causes of the problems and promoting techniques to solve the listening problems

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