

Listening Comprehension and Listening Anxiety: A Case of Basic Listening Class Students at English Department UNP Padang

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Abstract

Listening anxiety which makes someone feel tensions, fear, uncomfortable and worry was suspected to affect students' comprehension in listening class. Therefore, this research aims to find the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension of English department students who had taken Basic Listening class at Universitas Negeri Padang. The type of research used in this research was quantitative research. The population of this research was the second year students in Basic Listening Class of English Department. The sample was 30 students who were chosen randomly from the total population using Simple Random Sampling. The data were collected through questionnaire and an English Listening test using TOEIC test. The results showed that Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) and Listening Comprehension (LC) have a negative correlation ($r = -.006$) which indicates that high anxiety blocks the processing of listening anxiety, and when the higher anxiety the students have, the lower listening comprehension they make. Further research related to listening comprehension and listening anxiety is suggested to do.

Keywords: *anxiety, listening anxiety, basic listening*

Introduction

English is essential to be mastered for the sake of communication, especially for foreign language learners. However, due to English is not their first language, foreign language learners often feel anxious, even before they come to the classroom. This situation is called language anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) in Elaldi (2016, p. 219) describes language anxiety as “the feeling of the tension and apprehension related with the second language context-listening, speaking, and learning and it makes the students preventing the successful target of their performance in language target. Horwitz in Elaldi (2016, p. 219), asserted that majority of language learners have experienced the language anxiety”. The students think that English will be difficult and complicated to learn which will result to the anxiety itself.

Some researchers have proposed some strategies to reduce anxiety such by using media & material (Asmar & Ardi, 2013), by using English news (Adnan, 2013). However, those researches did not show clear relation to language anxiety. Meanwhile, in this research, one specific skill analyzed and discussed about is listening skill.

Listening is considered as a really important skill to be mastered by students. This idea is supported by the fact that students spend most of their time to listen to what their teachers says in class, for example, presenting lectures, asking questions, and so on. As stated by Celce-Muria in Yusnida, Muslem, and Manan (2017, p. 440), “the students are expected to listen twice as much as they speak, four times more than they read, and five times more than they write”. This proves that in reality, listening skill is more important than other skills seeing from how often the students using it compared to other skills.

Despite the fact that listening skill is very important, the students still have many factors that block them from gaining the listening comprehension. In EFL classes, the students tend to have many difficulties in comprehending the listening. These problems will cause them to have listening anxiety.

Anxiety and Language Anxiety

Anxiety is a common thing that happens to human. It is a common act that happens when someone is anticipating something. According to Horwitz in Serraj (2015, p. 1), anxiety is defined as “feeling tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry related to an arousal of the autonomic nervous system”. When someone is having an anxiety or being anxious, their nervous system will be working abnormally, and that will result to the feeling of tension, nervousness and worry.

Furthermore, language anxiety is an anxiety that happens in language learning. As it is stated by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) in Lababidi, (2016, p. 185) that language anxiety is a “psychological

construct particular to language learning and can be characterized as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Other researchers also suggest that language anxiety is when the language learners feel some sort of fear when they are about to perform in the second or foreign language (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1993, in Zhai, 2015, p. 40).

According to Musa, Hashim, Muhamad and Mohamed (2013, p. 326), there are three main categories of language anxiety, they are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. They asserted that communication apprehension is related to the learners' doubts and fear when they are about to talk or listen to others. As for test anxiety, they describe it as a fear of failing in the examination. Meanwhile, fear of negative evaluation is described as learners' perception on the judgments from teachers and friends toward their language. Therefore, it can be inferred that language anxiety plays a crucial role in making students facing difficulty in comprehending the lesson, as stated by MacIntyre & Gardner in Wang (2019, p. 121), "anxiety in particular interferes with mental thinking and cognitive behaviors, making learning performances less effective".

Listening Anxiety

Listening anxiety is a term to describe the problem that blocks the students in achieving the best comprehension they can get in listening. When a student is experiencing listening anxiety, she/he tends to show an unexpected response toward a task, such as not being able to complete or even hear the audio properly. As stated by Tahsildar and Yusoff (2014, p. 44), listening anxiety refers to "the psychological response of a person to listening task, which is determined by effect of feelings, beliefs and behaviors". According to Wheels, 1975, in Zhai (2015, p. 41), listening anxiety is "the fear of the listener of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, or not being able to adjust psychologically to message sent by others". Feelings, beliefs and behaviors are things that affect students' listening anxiety as they might give fear to students in doing listening tasks.

There are some main sources of listening anxiety according to Zhai (2015). The first one is lack of confidence. The higher someone's confidence, the more likely they gain benefit in listening class. Zhai (2015, p. 43) further explains, students tend to feel anxious in listening comprehension because they do not have much confidence and do not know much about listening activities when entering the college.

The second source of listening anxiety is the lack of listening strategies. Listening is an activity that is difficult to do especially for students of foreign language. Therefore, strategies are really required in order to get the best comprehension of it. However, foreign language students seem to have lack of listening strategies. Listening strategies can be taught by lecturers. So in order to make the students have good listening strategies, the lecturers should be the ones who teach them.

The third source of listening anxiety is characteristics of listening comprehension. "Listening comprehension is a complex process which does not exist in space, but only stays in a short time" (Zhai, 2015, p. 43). Due to its complex process that only happens in a short time, the listeners cannot go back to what they missed and repeat what has been said. In listening comprehension, the listeners need to catch the main idea of the speech, but when they miss one point, they usually stop to think about the point they missed. This results to the misunderstanding of meaning by the listeners. Therefore, this characteristic of listening comprehension makes listeners feel anxious.

The fourth source of listening anxiety is characteristics of listening materials. Yuan (2006) in Zhai (2015, p. 44) says that "the characteristic of listening materials include speed, pronunciation, acoustic conditions, length of listening materials, the level of vocabulary and the topic of the materials". Zhai (2015) in his research found that the speed of message delivery is anxiety-provoking. Furthermore, he explained that listening to different accents or long materials are difficult for the students because they easily missed some important information and this is what leads them to anxiety.

The last source of listening anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation. In the classroom, everything you do is being observed by the lecturer and classmates. In his research about listening anxiety saying that negative evaluation give bad impact to the students, Zhai asserted that "general statistics in the study indicate that the students of the students in the study have experienced a little higher listening anxiety" (Zhai, 2015, p. 44). Therefore, students tend to feel anxious of the judgments and evaluation they will get if they make mistakes.

Listening Comprehension

The term "listening comprehension" has a variety of definitions. Basically, listening comprehension is a process of understanding the spoken language. The term "understanding" in this idea can be comprehending the meaning of each words, knowing the speech sounds, and comprehending the whole

meaning of what being said. According to Hamouda (2013, p. 113), listening comprehension means “the understanding of what the listener has heard and their ability to re-explain the text with the correct meaning”.

According to Chastain (1988) as cited in Ahmadi (2016, p. 8), there are four components in listening comprehension. The first one is the ability to distinguish different sounds, intonation patterns, and voice qualities. The second is the ability to comprehend the whole message conveyed by a speaker. When two persons are communicating, the successful of the communication depends on the semantic meaning. What one comprehends is going to determine the successful of the communication. The third is the ability in carrying the message in auditory memory until it can be fully processed. The last component of listening comprehension is comprehension itself. According to Ahmadi (2016, p. 8) “comprehension is the speech reception at the syntactic, lexical, pragmatic, and discourse levels.” In comprehension, there are some different steps involved. Cutler & Clifton (2000) in Wong (2015, p. 78) give a simple a process with four major steps: decoding, segmenting, recognizing, and integrating. In decoding, listeners recognize the sounds of the language, for example, the syllables, phonemes, and other linguistic units. In segmenting, listeners divide input into linguistic units, for example, into syllables and words. Recognizing words is regard as the part that gives listeners problems because this is the part where lexical competition happens. Finally, integrating, in this step, listeners integrate the aural input with the social context to get the best comprehension (Wong, 2015, p. 78).

There have been many researchers who have done the analysis toward the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension, such as Golchi (2012) that investigated about the relationship between listening anxiety, listening strategy and listening comprehension of the students. In the next year, Serraj and Noordin (2013) also conducted a research to explore the possible impact of Foreign Language Anxiety and Foreign Language Listening Anxiety on learners’ listening comprehension. In the same year, Marzec-Stawiarska (2013) analyzed about factors and causes of listening anxiety in foreign language class. Then, in 2015, there is Serraj (2015) that talked about the factors of listening anxiety of the students and how to overcome it. Dalman (2016) also conducted a research to explore the relationship between listening anxiety, listening strategies, and listening proficiency among Iranian EFL university students, and followed by Tahsildar and Yusoff (2016) in the same year, who conducted a research to find out about students’ listening anxiety in one of the universities in Malaysia and implied that the students have a rather high level of listening anxiety, and Sawalha (2016) that analyzed about how the listening anxiety affected the students’ listening process during the class, lastly, Oteir and Aziz (2017) that talked about the impact of listening anxiety toward the students understanding. However, there are huge differences in the findings of these studies, some found that listening anxiety and listening comprehension is related, while the others, in opposite, found that there is no correlation between listening anxiety and listening comprehension.

Research Questions

The problem of this research is formulated in this following question:

1. Is there a correlation between listening anxiety of students who take Basic Listening class at English department of Universitas Negeri Padang and listening comprehension?
2. Do students with high and low levels of listening anxiety differ in their listening comprehension?

Research Methodology

This research aims to find the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension of English department students who had taken Basic Listening class at Universitas Negeri Padang.

Research Population and Sample

The population of this research was second year students of English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang who were taking Basic Listening class. There were 7 classes of second year students of English Department; 4 English Education classes and 3 English Literature classes. The researcher used Simple Random Sampling to take the sample because every individual in the population had the same probability of being selected and selection of one individual in no way affects selection of another individual so that the result of this research would be more reliable. Therefore, from the total population, the researcher randomly took 23 students to be participants.

Research Instrument

There are two instruments used in this research; questionnaire and an English test. The questionnaire used in this research is “Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Questionnaire (FLLA)” Adopted from Maizec-Stawiarska (2013) and Horwitz (2008). As for the English listening test, the researcher used an original TOEIC TEST.

Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Questionnaire (FLLAQ)

Adopted from Maizec-Stawiarska (2013) and Horwitz (2008), FLLAQ was the key instrument to test students’ listening anxiety level. It has 49 Likert-type items scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. A student’s choice in “Strongly Disagree” is equated with 1 point; “Disagree”, with 2; “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, 3; “Agree”, 4; “Strongly Agree”, 5.

TOEIC TEST

TOEIC Test used in this research was an original TOEIC Test. There are 100 questions of listening sections to test the students’ listening comprehension.

Data Analysis

(a) The FLLAQ was used to do a descriptive statistics with SPSS 25.0 to test the degree of listening anxiety. (b) The listening test was administered to obtain the listening scores. (c) The scores of listening test and all the data obtained from the FLLAQ were used to do a correlation analysis with SPSS 25.0.

Results and Discussion

Results Analysis

Reliability and Validity of FLLAQ

To assess the quality of the FLLAQ, reliability analysis was carried out.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	23	100,0
	Excluded ^a	0	,0
	Total	23	100,0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,912	49

The table shows that the reliability and validity of FLLAQ are .912 based on Cronbach’s alpha, which presents a good internal coefficient. Therefore, the FLLAQ is an acceptable instrument and can be used for a further statistics analysis

Descriptive Analysis of FLLAQ

To test the degree of the subjects’ listening anxiety, descriptive statistics of FLLAQ was conducted.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Statistics		
SCORE		
N	Valid	23
	Missing	0
Mean		159,65
Median		154,00
Std. Deviation		20,371
Variance		414,964
Range		75
Minimum		124
Maximum		199

Table 2 is the descriptive analysis of the FLLAQ. The mean ($m=159,65$) and Std.Deviation ($SD=20,371$) show that the subjects have experienced a high listening anxiety, which makes the subjects produce anxiety easily during the process of listening comprehension. In the investigation of FLLA, 47,8% students chose “Agree” and 30,4% students chose “Strongly Agree” when answering the item “If I let my mind drift even a little bit while listening to English, I worry that I will miss important ideas”; 47,8% students chose “Agree” and 17,4% chose “Strongly Agree” in the item “During English listening tests, I get nervous and confused when I do not understand every word”; and 65,2% students chose “Agree” and 13,0% chose “Strongly Agree” in the item “I get worried when I have little time to think about what I hear in English.” Therefore, anxiety is pervasive in foreign language listening comprehension.

Correlation Analysis

To find out the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension, the researcher made a correlation analysis between FLLAQ and TOEIC Test.

Table 3. Correlation between Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) and Listening Comprehension (LC)

		FLLA	LC
FLLA	Pearson Correlation	1	-.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,978
	N	23	23
LC	Pearson Correlation	-.006	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,978	
	N	23	23

Table 3 shows that FLLA and LC have a negative correlation ($r= -.006$) which indicates that when the students have a high anxiety level, then the listening comprehension is low.

Results and Discussion

Based on careful analyses of statistics, it can be seen that English Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) is negatively related with Listening Comprehension (LC), which indicates that high anxiety blocks the processing of listening anxiety, and the higher anxiety the students have, the lower listening comprehension they make.

Anxiety is an effective filter that makes listeners with higher anxiety level get blocked from getting comprehensible input, and this makes them get a really bad achievements. High anxiety is a great attention distraction in listening comprehension. When a student with high anxiety level finds an unfamiliar word or sentence, she or he becomes stress and fears not to be able to comprehend the whole meaning. Meanwhile, students with lower anxiety level can make a quick positive response about the unfamiliar words they find and make a correct judgment about it.

Earlier research about relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension showed the same results. Elkhafaifi (2005) in his research “Listening Comprehension and Anxiety in the Arabic Language Classroom” shows a significant negative correlation between listening anxiety and listening comprehension ($r = -.70, p < .01$), which indicates that students who reported higher listening anxiety had lower listening comprehension grades than students who reported lower anxiety. The shared variance (r^2) was .49.

In line with the previous study, Golchi (2012) in his research “Listening Anxiety and Its Relationship with Listening Strategy Use and Listening Comprehension among Iranian IELTS Learners” also found that

listening anxiety had negative correlation with listening comprehension. The results show a significant negative correlation with $r = -.63$ and $p < .05$. This shows that when IELTS learners' level of listening anxiety increased, their listening comprehension decreased. The other research about relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension also shows the same results. Zhai (2015) in his research "Influence of Anxiety on English Listening Comprehension: An Investigation Based on the Freshmen of English Majors" found the mean of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Questionnaire is 70.1481 ($m=70.1481$) and Std.Deviation $SD=8.6199$) that shows that the subjects have experienced a little high listening anxiety, which reflects that during the process of listening comprehension, the subjects are quite easy to produce anxiety. In correlation, Zhai found that Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) has a significant high negative correlation with Listening Proficiency ($r = -.639^{**}$). Meanwhile, in the correlation to listening comprehension, his indicates that much higher anxiety interferes with the processing of listening comprehension, and the stronger anxiety the students experience, the worse listening achievements they make.

However, Erlina, Inderawati, R., and Hayati, R. (2016) in their research "The Influence of Listening Anxiety to Listening Comprehension of English Education Study Program Students of Sriwijaya University" found a different result from the studies that have been discussed earlier. The result shows a positive correlation ($r = .514$) which indicates that there is no significant influence between listening anxiety and listening comprehension.

Conclusion

In Table 1 in the results of this study, the mean ($m=159,65$) and Std.Deviation ($SD=20,371$) show that the subjects have experienced a high listening anxiety. This is probably happened because English is not their first language and is to be expected for them to have the difficulties in English, especially in Listening class. In Table 2, it is showed that English Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) and Listening Comprehension (LC) have a negative correlation ($r = -.006$) which indicates that high anxiety blocks the processing of listening anxiety, and the higher anxiety the students have, the lower listening comprehension they make. It also can be concluded that the students with high and low levels of listening anxiety differ in their listening comprehension.

Suggestion

Some studies found that listening anxiety and listening comprehension have a negative correlation which means when the students have a high listening anxiety, their listening comprehension are low. While some others found that there is a positive correlation between listening anxiety and listening comprehension which indicates that there is no significant influence between the two components. However, this study is in line with the earlier studies which found that there is a negative correlation between listening anxiety and listening comprehension. Therefore, further research is suggested to do.

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