

STUDENTS' PROBLEM IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract

Listening is one of the skills provided for foreign language students that they need to have besides speaking, reading, and writing. However, there are still many students who face difficulties in the learning process of listening. This study aims to identify problems faced by students in listening skill at the English Department at the university level. The data of this study were obtained from students of the English Department of FBS, Universitas Negeri Padang (State University of Padang), in Indonesia who were included in this study. Data collection is done through listening tests to get information about problems faced by students. In addition, observation on the learning process and evaluation of the teaching materials used were also carried out. The research findings show that there are six sub-listening skills that are often become the problems faced by students. This research also gathered five sources of the listening problems. It implies that the lecturer needs to have multimedia and technological literacy to prepare the students in listening skills.

Keywords: students' problems in listening, multimedia, lecturer

Introduction

Listening is one of the language skills learnt at a foreign language department, it is also learnt at English Department of Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni (FBS), Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). Listening skill is an important part of communication, and are the basis of second or foreign language learning. Learners get language input through listening. Acquisitions occur only when students get fairly comprehensive input (Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, & Herzog, 1984). The essence of interaction ability is the ability to understand what others say. The estimated time in adult human communication activities is 45% used for listening, 30% for speaking, 16% for reading, and 9% for writing (Rivers & Temperley, 1978, p. 62). Therefore, listening is very important and important not only as a receptive language skill but also as a tool needed for the development of oral language skills.

Listening skill for learners of foreign languages is a very important skill, because this skill is needed to master the subject matter and are needed to listen to lectures delivered in the language concerned (Tresnadewi, 1994, p. 28). Learners are not only required to understand what is said, but also to select important and relevant parts of information to be compiled quickly in oral and written forms and as notes that can be understood in the future.

Moreover, English as a foreign language which is also acquired primarily through the reception of understandable inputs and listening capacity is a significant constituent in achieving understandable language input. Listening has an important role in language classrooms because it provides input for listeners (Rost, 1994). Humans achieve language through understanding the linguistic information they encounter (Krashen, 1985). Therefore, English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang provides listening subjects for the students, they are Listening I, Listening II, and Advanced Listening. These subjects aim at providing the listening skill and listening proficiency of the students for TOEFL and TOEIC test.

All types of learning including language learning cannot occur without understanding input and understanding. Thus listening is a fundamental language skill, and therefore worthy of being very important among other language skills for L2 students. Listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language attainment and the development of other language skills (Hasan, 2000, p. 138). Unfortunately, most of the students often face the problem in the listening subjects.

Actually, there are some researchers have reported students' problem in listening subjects (Cubalit, 2016; Farchan, 2013; Fauziah, 2015). This research was conducted on Arabic and French languages, therefore, this research is focused on English language students. Moreover, this paper is also aims at finding the source of the problems and tentative solution for the problems.

Method

This is a pilot research for the subject matter at UNP. The main purpose of this research is to learn about the problem of the student in listening the English Education Study Program. The research methods used listening tests to identify students' problems related to the sub-skills of listening. This study uses a qualitative method. The process of collecting data is done through observation of the teaching and learning process, carrying out field notes. Data collected in the form of difficulties faced by students in listening subjects and the causes of the difficulties. Data on difficulties include (1) difficulties in expressing the main ideas of the text, (2) difficulties in remembering the details and sequences of the texts that are listened to, (3) difficulties in giving comments or evaluating the text, and (4) difficulties in making conclusions from the listening text. The data regarding the causes of difficulties include: (1) the causes of difficulties originating from the linguistic aspects, and (2) the causes of the difficulties originating from non-linguistic aspects. The sources of data in this study are (1) observation notes, both participant and non-participant observation, supplemented with recordings, (2) conclusions from questionnaire results and interviews, and (3) listening test answer sheets.

This study used observation techniques, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation studies. Observations are made so that researchers can direct the teaching and learning process in accordance with the research objectives. Interviews are conducted to strengthen data that has been obtained from other instruments and obtain answers directly to the actual problems faced by the subject. The researcher focuses on the answers given with expansion questions that focus on the problems that have been asked on the questionnaire sheet. Documentation studies are used to strengthen data obtained through analysis of errors made by students in answering daily test questions, and midterm tests. The data validity technique was used by the technique of extension of participation, persistence of observation, triangulation, peer checking, and referential adequacy. Instrument validity and reliability need to be done so that the instruments used are really feasible and appropriate for the desired data. All the questionnaires used in the study of student problems in the study of the validity of construct (using validity) by using expert judgment. The difficulties in listening foreign language had been studied by Darti and Asmawati, A.(2017). It was about factors influencing students' listening. Cubalit, A.N. (2016) also had studied listening comprehension problems of Thai university English learners. It was about listening comprehension problems encountered by students related to the listening text, the speaker, and the listener. It also studied strategies the students used to resolve their listening comprehension problems. Different from both of the previous researches, the researcher of this research studied about general sub-listening skills and the use of multimedia.

Results of the Research

After conducting the test, the researcher analyze the result and confirmed with the lecturer and students' daily test. Based on document analysis, it is found that there is a high percentage of students who get C or lower than C in the listening subject in the last few semesters. The accumulated value of Listening I courses from the three lecturers who teach this course shows the average student who gets a C or less than 35%.

Based on the indicators taken from the general sub-listening skills, which consists of 6 indicators, the level of student problems for each indicator presented can be illustrated in the following table.

Table 1. Problem Level Percentage of Listening to Students

No	Sub-Listening skills	% of the problems		
		Low	Middle	High
1	<i>Listening for the gist</i>	23	42	35
2	<i>Listening for specific information</i>	15	41	44
3	<i>Listening for important details</i>	17	38	45
4	<i>Listening for topic</i>	35	47	18
5	<i>Listening for main ideas</i>	43	35	22
6	<i>Listening to infer the meaning</i>	9	35	56

The table above illustrates that students experience difficulties in each indicator of sub-listening skills. The highest level of student problems is in the listening to infer the meaning indicator, with the percentage of students who are in the high category is 56%, followed by listening for important details, with the level of problems in the high category 45%, and listening for specific information, with levels the problem in the high category is at 44%. The indicator with the lowest level of problems is listening for main ideas, with the percentage of problems in the low category at 43%, followed by listening for topic, with the percentage in

the low category at 35%. This shows that most students have problems understanding all the sub listening skills that are trained or tested.

There are several factors that cause a high percentage of students who get low scores. The results of informal interviews with 15 students who received low scores indicated that the first factor that caused their low scores was the high level of difficulty of the material provided by lecturers compared to their general listening ability. Second, they did not get enough time to practice listening in English in the classroom. The time allocated for 3 credits in 1 week is not enough for them to understand listening material with a high level of difficulty. This subject is provided in three semesters that consists of Listening I, Listening II and Advanced Listening.

Third, the learning strategies used by teaching lecturers are less varied so they cannot accommodate a variety of learners' learning styles. It is because the lecturers mostly used audio material only. Meanwhile, students have different learning style (Ardi, 2006). Fourth, the teaching material used is less diverse, it has not accommodated various kinds of genres (types of text) commonly found in real situations so that when students face exams that contain various test material they have significant difficulties. Fifth, the use of learning media that tends to benefit students with audio learning styles makes it difficult for students with visual and interactive learning styles.

Discussion

The sources of the problems of this research are different from the previous researches that mention linguistic and non-linguistics problems as the sources of the problems (Darti and Asmawati A., 2017; Cubalit A.N, 2016; and Nurhidayati, 2004). However, the problems identified in their researches mostly related to linguistic aspect. Related to the non-linguistic aspect, it actually can be anticipated by using multimedia materials. The multimedia materials can provide not only audio material (with linguistic aspect) but also some non-linguistic aspect, such as, the use of picture, video, graphics etc.

One of the causes of the students' low ability to listen is the lack of variety of teaching materials used in listening. The results of the preliminary analysis of the listening material available and used by lecturers in listening subjects showed that the lecturers used the main book, *Active Listening: Building* written by Marc Helgesen and Steven Brown in 1997. This book has 20 training units which are usually used in one unit with two exercises per meeting by one lecturer. This material has warming up activities and exercises. Warming up is the introduction of vocabulary, activation of general knowledge, etc. The material is used sequentially according to the book by dividing the odd and even units for each lecturer. The material from this book uses thematic patterns, such as introduction, number, direction, etc. If the lecturer then gives additional training by taking other audio material such as, *American Anecdote* (1990), *Active Listening* (1988), occasionally given training from videos taken from various sources using two televisions or LCD. Activities with videos are more attractive to students and they can understand because they are supported by visualization.

With this condition, it is obtained an illustration that listening learning activities are mostly classical by equating students' ability to listen. There are limitations to the material that only follows audio books, while students are more motivated by video material. On the other hand, the English Language Department FBS UNP has a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) facility that is able to facilitate students learning with computers by adjusting their respective abilities. Labor is integrated with the system.

The results observations made by the researchers showed the low interest of lecturers in listening subjects in using multimedia-based learning and developing teaching materials based on technology is one of the source of the problems. Currently, the lecturers are still dominant used audio listening material in the laboratories with tapes and tape recorders as the main media. The use of video material is only a variation. Furthermore, the use of multimedia-based materials is almost non-existent. The learning management system (LMS) that has been provided by State University of Padang to facilitate lecturers to develop e-learning based learning is not well utilized. In addition, the teaching materials used tend to be monotonous because it only comes from one or two source books. While the latest learning demands, especially learning listening, is the variety of material resources used and the variety of genres taught so that learners will not have difficulty in understanding the texts that appear in real situations.

Multimedia is one form of technological developments that influence large enough toward the changes in foreign language learning system, especially learning English as a second language or a foreign language. This is evidenced by the increasing number of teaching and learning process that uses this multimedia technology (Gilakjani, Ismail. Ahmadi, 2011; Chang, Lehman, 2012; Asma, 2013). For example, in many universities abroad subjects related to language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing are offered using various multimedia technologies. There are some studies that use multimedia as a tool in the learning process and there are also courses that have made multimedia as the basis of development of

materials for recovery, such as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) courses but not in the Listening course.

With this condition, it is obtained an illustration that listening learning activities are mostly classical by equating students' ability to listen. There are limitations to the material that only follows audio books, while students are more motivated by video material. On the other hand, the English Language Department FBS UNP has a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) facility that is able to facilitate students learning with computers by adjusting their respective abilities. Labor is integrated with a Local Area Network (LAN) system and connected to the internet. This facility is only used by two lecturers in the Independent Study Listening activity by providing online material at the UNP e-learning site.

To overcome this problem various things can be done, such as updating the design of listening learning, maximizing the use of the latest media, and designing learning models based on the use of the latest technology, especially multimedia. The development of listening and genre-based teaching material models is a solution that can be offered and is believed to improve the ability to listen to students because the application of this model will use a variety of learning materials and existing media, especially technology-based media, such as computers. Thus the research and development of a model of listening material based on genre and multimedia is very necessary.

Conclusions

The research findings show that there are six sub-listening skills that are often become the main problems faced by students. This includes listening for the gist, listening for specific information, listening for important details, listening for topic, listening for main ideas, listening to infer the meaning. This research also gathered five sources of the listening problems. They are low scores was the high level of difficulty of the material provided by lecturers compared to their general listening ability. Second, they did not get enough time to practice listening in English in the classroom. Third, the learning strategies used by teaching lecturers are less varied so they cannot accommodate a variety of learners' learning styles. Fourth, the teaching material used is less diverse, it has not accommodated various kinds of genres (types of text) commonly found in real situations so that when students face exams that contain various test material they have significant difficulties. Fifth, the use of learning media that tends to benefit students with audio learning styles makes it difficult for students with visual and interactive learning styles. The main causes of the problems are the low ability is the lack of variety of teaching materials used in listening learning. It implies that the lecturers of listening need to master multimedia and technological literacy in teaching listening. This competency will help the lecturers in developing their students' listening mastery.

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