



LISTENING COMPREHENSION HINDRANCES OF EFL (ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE) LEARNERS ON 2016/2017 ACADEMIC YEAR IN ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITAS ISLAM RIAU

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Abstract

As one of essential skills to master a language, listening subject is provided as one of compulsory subjects to the learners in English study program at university level in order to help them in improving their English skill in term of having good ability in comprehending spoken information delivered by native or non-native speakers of English in various contexts of communication. Despite of having long term English learning experiences and easy access of learning sources, the learners seem still having hindrances in listening comprehension skill. Based on researcher's experiences in teaching interpretative listening subject to the first year students of English study program, most of the students did not actively involve during the teaching and learning activities, they also had low performances on listening. In relation to the phenomena, this study was conducted with a descriptive research design in order to answer a question about the first year students' listening comprehension hindrances. The participants were 30 students undertaking interpretative listening subject on 2016/2017 academic year at English Study Program, Universitas Islam Riau. Distributing questionnaire and interviewing the learners were done in collecting the data. Then, the findings show that there are five factors encountered by the learners as their hindrances in listening activities; inadequate listening practices, speed-rate of speakers, pronunciation, unknown vocabulary, and grammatical understanding.

Keywords: *Listening, Hindrances, EFL*

BERAGAM KESULITAN DALAM MEMAHAMI INFORMASI PADA KEGIATAN MENYIMAK YANG DIHADAPI OLEH MAHASISWA BAHASA INGGRIS PADA TAHUN AKADEMIK 2016/2017 DI UNIVERSITAS ISLAM RIAU

Abstrak

Sebagai salah satu keterampilan yang mendukung dalam menguasai suatu bahasa, mata kuliah menyimak diberikan kepada para mahasiswa di program studi pendidikan bahasa inggris untuk membantu mereka dalam meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa inggris mereka, terutama terkait dengan keterampilan memahami informasi lisan yang dituturkan oleh penutur asli ataupun bukan

penutur asli bahasa Inggris pada beragam konteks komunikasi. Meskipun memiliki pengalaman yang panjang dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris dan mendapatkan kemudahan dalam memperoleh sumber belajar, para mahasiswa sepertinya masih mengalami berbagai kesulitan dalam memahami informasi yang mereka dengar. Berdasarkan pengalaman peneliti dalam mengampuh mata kuliah Interpretative Listening kepada para mahasiswa tahun pertama di program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris, ditemukan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa belum terlibat aktif selama kegiatan pembelajaran, bahkan mereka tidak menunjukkan pencapaian yang baik pada kegiatan menyimak. Berdasarkan kondisi tersebut, Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dengan pendekatan deskriptif yang dilaksanakan untuk menemukan kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh para mahasiswa dalam kegiatan menyimak. Tiga puluh mahasiswa yang mengikuti perkuliahan Interpretative Listening pada tahun akademik 2016/2017 dilibatkan pada penelitian ini. Instrumen penilaian yang digunakan adalah survey dengan menggunakan kuesioner dan interview. Selanjutnya, data yang diperoleh dianalisa secara kualitatif dan dipresentasikan secara terperinci. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa latihan menyimak yang jarak dilakukan, pengucapan, kosakata yang tidak diketahui, dan pemahaman tata bahasa.

Kata Kunci : *Menyimak, Kesulitan, Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris*

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of essential skills to master a language, listening subject is provided as one of compulsory subjects to the students in English study program at university level. One of the objectives of presenting the subject is to help them in improving their English skill in term of having good ability in comprehending spoken information delivered by native or non-native speakers of English in various contexts of communication.

Listening skill is basic skill that can enhance the students' ability to master a language because it provides basic components of language and cognitive development, Malkawi (2010). It means that the

learners' success in mastering the language is influenced by their listening comprehension proficiency. In English language learning context, to have good listening skill also requires the students to be able to understand speakers' accent or pronunciation, grammar, and recall information.

In relation to the students' experiences in learning English, started when most of them were in Junior High School level, they must get familiar with the listening activities and have high performances on it. They also suppose to know very well how to overcome some problems that they find during the listening comprehension activities. In other words, listening activities should not

become hindrances for the learners any more in communication process.

In addition, in technology era nowadays, there are numerous English aural materials that can be easily accessed by the learners. They can deploy the materials as their learning sources to keep practicing their listening skill. Hence, the students can easily practice and improve their listening comprehension. So, problems in terms of listening material resources can be covered.

Despite of having long term learning experiences and easy access of learning sources, the students seem still having hindrances in listening comprehension skill. Based on researchers' experiences in teaching interpretative listening subject to the first year students of English study program, most of the students did not actively involve during the teaching and learning activities, they also had low performances on listening. Even though the teacher had done some efforts to improve their performances on listening, such as giving the aural material a week before it is going to be discussed, playing the aural materials for several times, guiding them to apply some strategies during listening activities, but the expected results are still under the average.

Based on the description above, it is necessary to investigate factors influence the students' problems in listening. Hence, the title of this study is *Listening*

Comprehension Hindrances of the First Year Students' on 2016/2017 Academics year in English Study Program at Universitas Islam Riau.

Listening Comprehension

Listening has significance role in people's life; it is used as primary step of learning, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011). It is a heart of second language learning and key factor influences learners' language proficiency, Supharatypthin (2004). The learners will get difficulties to develop other language skills if they still have problems in listening. It is the first skill that should be acquired before the learners start to speak, read, and write, Malkawi (2010).

In term of English language teaching context, listening activity refers to the skill that can facilitate the learners to learn about native English speakers' accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension, Malkawi (2010). In this case, the students' language skill can be simultaneously developed through their intensive practices of listening.

In addition, Rasouli, et. al, (2013) state that having good listening skill can facilitate English learners to access various kind of audio visual information available via network based multimedia. It means that the learners can easily get meaningful information which is widely provided in internet as they have good listening comprehension,

for example; the learners can get easy to improve their vocabulary mastery and pronunciation by using video that facilitate them to get a lot of information that can build them as skillful and high competence learners.

However, there are numerous students who still get problems in listening comprehension. As stated by Elkhafaifi (2005) in Bagheri and Karami (2014) listening is considered as one of sources of the students' stress that happens because of their difficulties in comprehending the spoken information. In common phenomena, many students try to avoid their listening classes because they are afraid and frustrated to follow all activities during the course. The following information presents some essential factors of students' listening comprehension:

Influential Factors in Listening Comprehension

Due to the importance of having good listening comprehension skill, English learning instructions are rarely taught to the students although the students and teachers aware about the importance of the skill, Mendelsohn (2001), (2006); Berne(2004); LeLoup & Pontiero (2007) in Rasouli (2013). In this case, it can be one of influential factors that affects the students' English listening comprehension skill because they are not used to practice the listening activities in which they will not be familiar with some strategies or tips that they can apply to achieve the listening objectives.

As, Rasouli, et. al (2013) state, listening is not easy to be acquired because it requires comprehension of aural input that needs listeners to have good general background knowledge and language skill. In this case, both of the factors are considered essential in the process of comprehending aural materials. The listeners' familiarity with a topic discussed will help them in comprehending the materials. Besides that, it should be integrated with the language skill components, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

According to Bang and Hiver (2016), there are three factors that might affect second language listening success; linguistic, listening strategy, and affective factors. Linguistics factors refer to linguistics knowledge such as vocabulary and grammatical knowledge are key elements needed in the process of comprehending listening contents. All of them are a unity that will also influence the comprehension whether in written or verbal communication.

Then, having listening strategy can also influence the students' listening proficiency in which can be very helpful for them in the process of comprehension. Students' high proficiency in listening is characterized by their flexibility in applying strategies in every phases of listening, Vandegift and Tafaghodtari (2010) in Bang and Hiver (2016)

Moreover, motivation and anxiety are two affective factors that entail in listening activities. Hence, the teachers as facilitators have to be able to encourage the students to actively enhance their listening comprehension skill and reduce the students' anxiety during the teaching and learning activities. As mentioned by, Huang (2010), students' anxiety adversely affect the students' language performances. Hence, the students' motivation in learning should be increased, but their anxiety should be swept out in order to be successful learners.

Supharatpythin (2014) also state that learners, teaching methods, linguistics and non-linguistics, characteristics of the spoken language, and Classroom facilities are influential factors towards EFL/ESL students' performances on listening. In this case, the learners have to work actively to develop their listening comprehension by practicing it and enhancing their linguistics and non-linguistics knowledge. Besides that teachers as guides during the teaching and learning process should apply appropriate teaching methods, prepare proper learning materials for the students, and ensure all tools used during listening activities can facilitate the students to enhance their listening comprehension.

2. METHOD

This is a descriptive research which was conducted to answer a

question about the first year students' listening comprehension hindrances. The participants were 30 students undertaking interpretative listening subject on 2016/2017 academic year at English Study Program, Islamic University of Riau. Questionnaire and interview were used as instruments to explore the learners' hindrances in listening activities. The questionnaire consisted two parts; the first part was designed to find out the learners' learning experiences on listening, and the second one to gather specific factors influence their hindrances. Furthermore, interview was also conducted to get additional information relate to the learners' specific problems in listening. Open ended question technique was conducted by randomly selecting several students to give further explanation about their response in the questionnaire.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

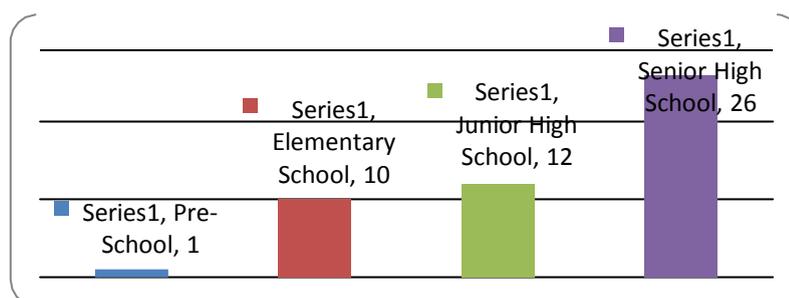
After analyzing the questionnaire and result of interview, there are some factors encountered by the learners as their hindrances to have good performances in listening; Inadequate listening practices appeared as the main factor influenced the learners' hindrances in listening. Then it links to the learners' unfamiliarity of speakers' speed rate, pronunciation, and unknown vocabulary.

1. Inadequate Listening Practice

Most of the learners' stated that they have been learning English since they were at Elementary school, however, listening practices in the

classrooms were new skill for them. The learners' English listening practices were begun when they were at Senior High School, it can be seen in the following chart:

Chart 1: Learners' English Listening Experiences



Since English has been introduced to the learners at early age when they were at pre-school or elementary school level. The data above represent that the learners did not get adequate experiences to develop their listening skill. There was one students who experienced in learning listening since her teacher facilitated her to learn the skill by listening to the music. However, she did not get the same experience when she was at Elementary and Junior High School because the teacher never conducted the listening practice. Then, 10 and 12 students who have started their listening practices in their English class at Elementary and Senior High Schools said that the listening activities were not regularly conducted as other language skills because the teachers never guided them to have the

listening practice. The listening activities were only done by listening to the teachers in delivering information to the students. When the teachers explained the lesson in Bahasa Indonesia, they would not get any English listening practices. There were 26 students out of 30 who stated that they have been learning English listening at Senior High School, but the listening practiced was not regularly conducted in their classes. It was only conducted a year or six months before the National Examination. Meanwhile, there are 4 students who never get intensive listening activity in their English classroom. They just start to be familiar with the listening when taking interpretative listening subject in University. In this case, the students' problems in listening activities were influenced by their

experiences in listening practices. As other language skills, the listening skill also needs to be practice intensively in order to be skillful with it.

2. Unfamiliarity of Speakers' Speed Rate

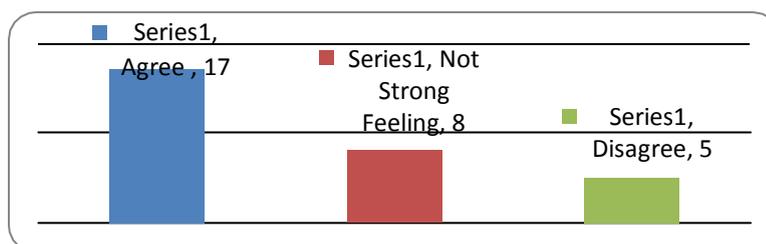
The learners' ability to comprehend information from English native speakers during listening activities is also influenced by the speakers' speed rate which is too fast for them. This second factor

is found based on the learners' response to the following statement:

Statement 2: In listening activity, information that is delivered by the speakers sounds too fast. It influences your ability in comprehending the information.

The chart below represents number of students' views in term of speakers' speed rate that they listen in their listening practices.

Chart 2. Unfamiliarity of Speakers' Speed Rate



Most of the learners show their agreement in responding a statement about speakers' speed rate which sounds too fast for them. There are 17 out of 30 students agree with the statement that show that the learners unfamiliarity with the speakers' speed rate. Actually, the speakers just speak in normal speed, but the learners seem not used to practice their listening activities even they realize about the importance of having good listening skill.

When interviewing several students who disagree with the statement, she said that they love to practice their listening activity by listening to the music. Then, simultaneously they get familiar with the speed rate of speakers in audio or video recording materials presented by the teachers in the class.

Based on this second factor, all English learners have to be able to find their best way to practice listening every day. Hence, the speed

rate of speakers will sound naturally for them.

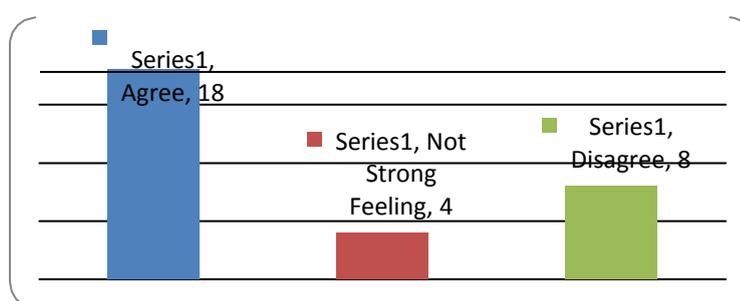
3. Pronunciation

As one of important language components in verbal communication, pronunciation also appears as a factor influence the learners' difficulties in

comprehending information that they listen to. It is based on their responses in the following statement:

Statement 3: *When doing listening practice, the speakers' pronunciation styles guide you into confusion of understanding the information that you listen to.*

Chart 3. Pronunciation



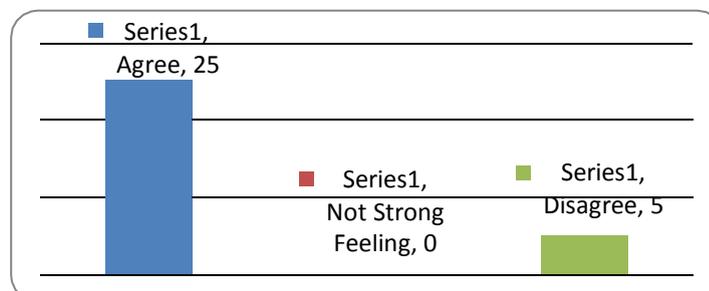
The learners' misspronunciation of some words influence their understanding about aural information that they usually listen in their interpretative listening subject. 18 students among 30 students admitted that the speakers' pronunciation styles guided them into a confusion during listening activities. Then, 4 students did not have very strong feeling about the statement which indicated that sometime the speakers' styles in pronouncing every single information appeared as their problems, and in some other times, it did not affect. Meanwhile, there 8 students who do not find any serious problems in listening comprehension because of the speakers' pronunciation styles. Then, an

interview conducted to the students who agreed with the first stament said that they realised about their limited knowledge of english pronunciation. So, it sometimes become a hindrances in listening comprhenension activities.

4. Unknown Vocabulary

Unfamiliar words stated by speakers in aural resources are also a factor that can affect the learners' hindrances in listening comprehension process. This finding is based on the learners' response in the following statement:

Statement 4: *Unknown words that you listen affect your listening comprehension skill.*

Chart 4. Unknown Vocabulary

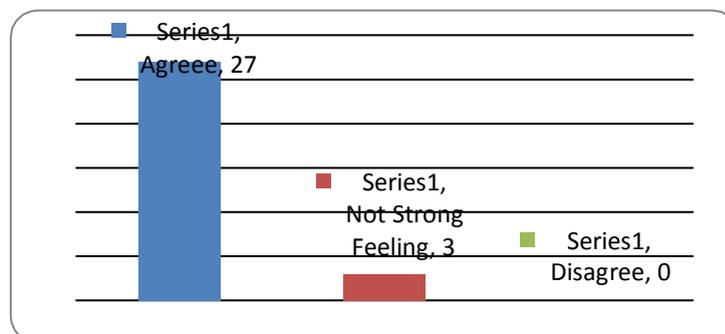
Most of the students agree with the statement above, it shows that limited vocabulary mastery can be very influential factor in listening comprehension activity. The students said that they could get frustrated in their listening activity because of their difficulties to understand many unfamiliar terms stated by the speakers. However, it was not going to be a serious problem when there were only a few unknown words because they could just ignore them and focus on the whole information. Then, five students who disagree with the statement above shared that unknown words that they found in their listening activities can be anticipated by making some predication about what the speaker is trying to say. One of them said that she just needs to focus on the idea of speakers without really concern to the meaning of every single word used. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that most of the students do not realize about some strategies that they can apply to help them in comprehending information even

though there are some unfamiliar words produced by the speakers. Despite of applying the strategies, the learners are also required to keep enriching their vocabulary mastery.

5. Grammatical Understanding

As one of important components of a language, grammatical understanding of language learners significantly influences their ability in mastering all language skills. In listening activities, the students' ability to comprehend spoken information that they listen is supported by their good grammatical understanding. This is in line with the students' responses when they were asked about the roles of having good grammatical understanding to help them in comprehending information in listening activities. The following information presents about the students' views:

Statement 5: *Your grammatical understanding helps you in understanding information that you listen to.*

Chart 5. Grammatical Understanding

There are 27 students admitted that their grammatical understanding is another influential factors that affect their listening comprehension. In some conditions, their grammatical knowledge can guide them to predict main information presented by the speakers. A student stated that listening to a to be “was” can make them easier in understanding about the sequence of time of the story. In other words, they can easily know the idea that they listen to is about past information. Besides that, they can easily understand information even though they missed some parts during their listening activities. In this case, the students have to improve their grammatical understanding in order to support their listening performances.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite of having several years of English learning experiences, the learners still encounter some problems in listening activities. Lack

of listening practices in the classroom mainly affect their performances on listening. Most of the learners got particular guidance in listening skill when they were at Senior High School level which was conducted as an effort to prepare the students to face national exam. It shows that listening was not regularly practices as other language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking. In this case, the learners were not really familiar on listening activities, some barriers appear when they do listening activities, such as unfamiliarity of speakers’ speed rate, pronunciation, unknown vocabulary, and grammatical understanding.

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