

EFL Students' English Listening Comprehension Problem: A study of English Teacher Education Program

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehensively is one of the way to build EFL students' Listening skill, however, they still got problem in different phase of listening. The aimed of the study to identified the listening comprehension problem of EFL students during take English teacher program, the data was collected from Muhammadiyah university students in Kendari. This descriptive study used the listening comprehension problem questionnaire. The result of the study showed that the students still got difficulty in all three phases of listening problem, they are perception, parsing and utilization, moreover, the highest problems was in perception problem. So this problem is highly influence their quality of listening skill. This findings are expected to be a good implication for the lecturer in designing course and listening teaching strategy.

Keywords: EFL students, listening comprehension problem, listening skill

INTRODUCTION

Much attention to the study of students' listening comprehension conducted by some researcher (Zhang et al, 2011; Hamouda 2013; Nowrouzi 2015). Listening is an important skill; it enables language learners to receive and interact with language input and facilitates the emergence of other language skills (Vandergrift 2006 and Goh, 2012). It also a vital language because it influences the language input got by students in the classroom (Rost 1994). In a learning process, listening is not only the first of the language arts skills developed, it is also the skill most frequently used in both the classroom and daily life. Listening ability plays a significant role in the development of other language arts skills, it also helps students build vocabulary, develop language proficiency, and improve language usage (Barker, 1971: 35). Hence, Listening is as comprehensible input that is very useful for language acquisition.

The EFL students learn English as foreign language. It is learned in all level of school to university. The English learning dominantly focused on reading, writing, listening and speaking, it also occurred in this campus. In listening classes, students generally still have a lot of difficulties in listening, one of them because they have to understand the material in the form of audio, besides that it takes a high concentration in understanding the contents of the audio. As result, most of students were unable to comprehend completely the message of speaker in audio. Therefore, the lecturer should find the effective way of teaching methods and strategies to solve students' listening problem.

There are three students' listening problem based on Anderson's (1995) three-phase cognitive processing model of language cognitive. The three-phase listening model are perception, parsing and utilization. Perception process refers to preserving attention to spoken input and inability distinguish the sound and words, Parsing means converting the input to maintain a meaningful demonstration in short-term memory, it also related to syntactic and semantic, and utilization concerns the use of background knowledge to interpret the input for storage and discourse in nature (Anderson, 1995; Goh, 2000; Vandergrift, 2003).

Listening is repeatable learning, only repeated practice would improve one's listening ability (Gao, 2014). Therefore, listening teaching requires more attention to improve students' language skills. The lecture should enhance their awareness of students' listening comprehension (Zhang, 2011; Kurita, 2012). The use of language comprehensively becomes the focus of teaching listening, it is comprehensible part and one of the natural network by which to obtain knowledge.

This study explores the problem of different phases of listening faced by the EFL students with the aim of improving their listening skills in general. By investigating students' listening problems, we can suggest appropriate and effective listening strategies to develop students listening comprehension. Identifying student difficulties early is one way of enhancing students' metacognitive knowledge of listening process (Zhang, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

This study related to the investigation of students' difficulties in listening comprehension at Muhammadiyah University of Kendari. The writer used quantitative method to answer the research question by describing the result of questionnaire of students' listening difficulties. According to Gunderson (2000) Quantitative research is 'explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)'. The participant of the study were English Department students' of Muhammadiyah Kendari. Two classes of students were taken as participant to fill the questionnaire. The content item of questionnaire consists of perception problem, parsing problem and utilization problem of Anderson's (1995) three phases cognitive model.

RESULT

This section aims to present the statistical results and the data analyses in order to identify students' difficulties problem in listening. Factors causing students listening comprehension problems are categorized into the three cognitive stages of perception, parsing, and utilization.

Table 1. Perception Problem

| No | Statement | Frequency | Percent |
|----|---|-----------|---------|
| 1 | I can hear the sound but not clear words | 25 | 56.8 |
| 2 | I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast. | 22 | 50 |
| 3 | I find it difficult when missing the beginning of the text | 30 | 86.1 |
| 4 | I know the meaning of the words when seeing it | 17 | 38.6 |
| 5 | While listening, I get slow in recalling the meaning of familiar words | 25 | 56.8 |
| 6 | I find it difficult to understand listening text in which there are too many unfamiliar words or expression | 25 | 56.8 |
| 7 | While listening, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words. | 25 | 56.8 |
| 8 | I find it difficult not recognize so many sound and words | 26 | 36.6 |
| 9 | When thinking about meaning of unfamiliar words, I neglect the next part of the listening text. | 5 | 11.3 |
| 10 | I find it difficult to really concentrate on listening. | 20 | 45.4 |

Table 1 shows the result of students' difficulty in Listening especially in the perception problem, there are ten statements related to perception. About thirty of students (86%) held that difficulty "when missing the beginning of the text". Which means that they couldn't catch the idea when they missed the information at the beginning. There are twenty six of students (37%) got difficulties when "did not recognize so many sound and words, some of words in

English have same sound or sometimes called as homophones or minimal pairs, it can be one of the reason of thus difficulties. While the difficulties in “recognizing the words, getting slow in recalling the meaning of familiar words, understanding listening text which have too many unfamiliar words or expression and guessing the meaning of unknown words” have same frequency where twenty five of students (57%) got among difficulties. It means that lack of vocabulary becomes one the most problem in listening comprehension.

In the other statement in table above, twenty two of students (50%) got difficult in understand well when the speaker speech too fast. When the speaker talk too fast will make students confuse particularly in recognizing the now words. While twenty of students (45.4%) got “difficult to really concentrate on listening”, they just have short time to focus in it. Beside that there are 17 of students (39%) “know the meaning of the words when seeing it”, even they have enough written vocabulary but not enough for listening. the lowest difficulties is “neglect the next part of the listening text when thinking unfamiliar words”, it means that when the students didn't recognize unfamiliar words it will influence their understanding of next text.

Table 2. Parsial Problem

| No | Statements | Frequency | Percent |
|----|--|-----------|---------|
| 1 | I find it difficult to quickly remember words or phrases I have just heard | 15 | 34.09 |
| 2. | I find it difficult to understand the meaning of sentences | 17 | 38.6 |
| 3. | I find it difficult to remember the meaning of a long listening text | 21 | 47.7 |
| 4. | I find it difficult to guess the accurate meaning of words in sentences | 18 | 40.9 |
| 5. | I find it difficult to follow unfamiliar topic | 17 | 38.6 |
| 6. | I find it difficult to understand a lot of new information in a short time | 11 | 25 |
| 7. | While listening, I miss the next part because of earlier problem | 15 | 34.09 |

In the second table above concerns the level of difficulty of listening in partial problems (unfamiliar topics, understanding information in sentences and memories). There are twenty one of students (48%) got “difficulty to remember the meaning of a long listening text”. It seems they have problem in short or long term memory. While there are eighteenth of students (41%) got “difficult to guess the accurate meaning of words in sentences, there are some words have much meaning it occasionally based on the context of the text. The difficulties of following unfamiliar topic and understanding the meaning of sentences have same frequency occurred in seventeenth of students (39%), it shows that when they got unfamiliar topic it will influence their understanding the meaning of the sentences.

The other result in table 2 shows that fifteenth of students (35%) “Difficult to quickly remember words have just heard and miss the next part because of earlier problem, it means that some of students got problem in short memory, they couldn't remember the words have just heard in long time. While there are eleventh of students (25%) are difficult to understand a lot of new information in short a short time, they can compared the information but not particularly in words.

Table 3. Utilization Problem

| No | Statements | Frequency | Percent |
|----|---|-----------|---------|
| 1. | I understand the words but not the intended message | 16 | 36.3 |
| 2. | I find difficulties to get the order of ideas in text. | 12 | 27.2 |
| 3. | When I listen to texts in English, I get confuse to understand the main idea of the text. | 9 | 20.4 |
| 4. | I find it difficult in getting the detail information | 9 | 20.4 |
| 5. | While listening, I find it difficult to relate among ideas | 13 | 29.5 |
| 6. | I find it difficulties to get the supporting ideas. | 7 | 15.9 |

In table 3 above illustrates the level of difficulty listening on the utilization problem (accepting messages, information, main ideas and supporting sentences in listening text). The highest difficulty is in understanding the intended message, which sixteenth of students (36%) frequency and the lowest is seventh of students (16%) find difficult to get the supporting ideas. The other difficulty is have in trouble to relate among ideas which thirteen of students (30%), it means that most of student can connect on paragraph to other paragraph. Besides that there are twelve of students (27%) have difficult to get the order of ideas in text. While there are only nine of students (20%) which got difficult in understanding the main idea of the text and getting detail information. It means the students' majority didn't get difficulty in recognizing the main idea in one text.

Table 4. Summary of Listening difficulty

| Problem | Frequency | % |
|-------------|-----------|-------|
| Perception | 22 | 49.52 |
| Parsing | 16 | 37 |
| Utilization | 11 | 24.9 |

Based on the summary of the level of listening difficulty above shows that students are still demanding in listening. The result shows that they have still got many difficulties in listening. But the highest level is in perception problem, where there are about twenty two of students (50%) got difficulties in perception problem, and about sixteenth of students (37%) got difficult in parsing problem, only about eleven of students (25%) difficult in utilization problem.

DISCUSSION

This result have similarities and differences to previous finding of the research. Nowrouzi et.al (2015) explored difficult in perception, while the difficulties in perception and parsing problem were exhibited by some researcher (Goh, 2000; Hasan 2000; Liu 2002). Nowrouzi et.al (2015) discussed that the most component of perception problems was about the high speech rate as well as Hayati (2010) and Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) studies. It indicates that most of EFL students felt worry of native speaker speed in talking. Underwood in Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) stated that speed rate can make listening passage is difficult to understand. If the speaker in audio talks too fast, it can be a big problem to understand the words. As a result, the EFL students are not able to comprehend the speaker said and it can create the serious problem with listening comprehension. In this present study found that speech rate is in the third main component of listening difficulty. Even the speaker speak quickly but among half of students are still able to catch speaker mean. Long and complete listening task will be very difficult for lower students, they only have at least three minutes to remember the words before (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016)

The greatest difficulty of perception problem in this study is when the EFL students missed the beginning of the text, it can be able to interrupt the next process of listening. This result was different from Nowrousi et.al (2015) and Goh (2000) finding, where it was not be the highest main of difficulty. Hamouda (2013) found in his study that when the EFL students listened the unknown word, it will interrupt their concentration to get the next important information.

In the parsing problem, it concerns of the difficulties with developing a coherent mental representation of words heard. In this study, parsing problem becomes a second main of students' difficulty in listening, where "getting difficult to remember the meaning of a long listening text" was the most main aspect. Gao (2014) also found that parsing problem was the second difficulties, but it had different aspect influenced it, one of them is the EFL students in China were quickly to forget what is heard. It is actually mostly the same, when the more EFL students' listened the long listening text the more they forget quickly".

Most of finding of the research got the utilization problem as the lowest problem in listening, as well as in this study, the EFL students have less difficulties in utilization. Utilization problem about the lack of prior knowledge or inappropriate application (Goh:2000). Lack of background knowledge was dominant aspect of utilization problem in Gao (2014) finding. Nurpahmi (2015) found that some way in activating students' prior knowledge can influence the students listening comprehension. The most dominant aspect of utilization problem in this study when the EFL students know the words but not the intended message, it can be caused by less of prior knowledge about the content of listening text.

CONCLUSION

In this study, there are three phase of difficulties occurred in EFL students: perception, parsing and utilization. The most dominant problems in perception problem were misperceiving of beginning of the text, recognizing the unfamiliar words or sound, and speed rate of speaker. While short memory in remembering the long sentences and recognize the words specifically which are related to parsing problem. The misperception of intended message of the text is related to utilization problem.

This result of study is expected can be able to give big impact to improve students' listening comprehension, so those of problems should be emphasized equally. The lecturer and students should develop the more in-depth understanding of that those of difficulties are essential and important, so that they can explore the appropriate strategies dealing with students' listening difficulties.

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