



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN TEACHING LISTENING
COMPREHENSION TO EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: Listening is widely acknowledged as a foundational skill for EFL students' language acquisition. Despite the importance of listening comprehension, many EFL students still struggled to comprehend effectively due to various difficulties. Many students face challenges such as fast speech, unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary and a lack of listening strategies, which negatively affect their listening skills. This article explores how learners face listening challenges and effective solutions to minimize the difficulties. Teachers and students emphasized solutions such as vocabulary, authentic media, post-listening activities, pre-listening, interactive methods, students' positive minds and motivation building. Furthermore, it is also give variety of ways and stages for developing listening skills in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: listening comprehension, pre-listening activities, post-listening activities, authentic materials, listening strategies.

Аннотация: Аудирование широко признаётся как фундаментальный навык в освоении английского языка студентами EFL. Несмотря на важность понимания на слух, многие студенты EFL всё ещё испытывают трудности с эффективным восприятием из-за различных проблем. Многие студенты сталкиваются с такими трудностями, как быстрая речь, незнакомые акценты, ограниченный словарный запас и отсутствие стратегий аудирования, что отрицательно влияет на их навыки слушания. В этой статье рассматривается, как учащиеся сталкиваются с проблемами восприятия на слух, и предлагаются эффективные решения для минимизации этих трудностей. Преподаватели и студенты подчёркивают решения, такие как развитие словарного запаса, аутентичные материалы, пост-аудиторные активности, предварительные аудиторные задания, интерактивные методы, положительный настрой учащихся и формирование мотивации. Также приводится разнообразие способов и этапов развития навыков аудирования.

Ключевые слова: понимание на слух, доаудиторные задания, постаудиторные задания, аутентичные материалы, стратегии аудирования.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to hear is a natural process that develops in all normal infants. Indeed, most of us begin to hear sounds before we even born. The physical components of listening process combine with the cognitive development in a child, resulting in sophisticated listening skills.

The ability to discriminate sound at an early age appears to be evident not only in mother tongue, but also other languages, too.



In real life situation, we often understand information and opinions with a certain purpose to each other. If students do not understand the meaning of the speech, they would have lack listening comprehension skills. In native speech we understand the meaning and the form of speech immediately, but in a foreign language have many challenges. EFL learners should focus more their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation subskills perceive and comprehend information. In other words, listening skills can be developed by teaching vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Vocabulary helps learners to understand the main idea of audio text and grammar helps to understand the meaning of the text concretely. As for Mendelsohn as cited in Gilakjani and Ahmadi states that listening has an important role in communication in which listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%. Thus, it is important to give more attention to listening skill. It is supported by Harmer who states that Dz listening is good for our students' pronunciation too, in that the more they hear and understand English being spoken, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and the sounds of both individual words and those which blend together in connected speech. Then, Richards states that understanding spoken discourse are bottom-up and top-down processing. The level of understanding the message and speech are connected with speaking and also listening experience because of this it is recommended to teach listening and speaking to EFL learners. Two different kinds of approaches are in listening comprehension skills: bottom-up and top-down approaches.

According to the bottom-up model, listeners build understanding by starting with the smallest units of the acoustic message: individual sounds and phonemes. These are combined with into words, phrases and clauses also sentences. Meanwhile, top-down model emphasizes the use previous knowledge in processing in a text rather than relying upon the individual sounds and words. The language date serve as cues to activate this top-down process. In teaching listening, Nunan suggests that we design activities that teach both bottom-up and top-down process. It is also important to teach learners specific strategies that can help them understand the processes underlying listening, so that gradually they can assume greater control of their own learning. Among the key strategies that can be taught are predicting, selective listening, listening for different purposes, inferencing, and personalizing. According to Field, examines a commonly used format for the teaching or listening, one which involves three stages in a listening activity: pre-listening, listening and post-listening. He points out the lack of activities often used at these different points in a lesson. Materials and teaching often tend to test listening rather than teach it and do not practice the kind of listening that takes a place in real life [1]. Field advocates the use of preset questions, the use of task-based listening activities, a focus on strategies and a greater use of authentic materials and shows how these recommendations affect the typical three-part listening lesson. He also shows how the teachers role play crucial role in the teaching listening. The teacher is not there simply to check answers, but rather to actively guide learners through the processes of listening, monitoring their listening challenge, and reshaping classroom tasks to provide maximum opportunities for learner involvement and participation and to develop a better awareness of how to listen.



Listening problem is barrier to everyone who learnt languages because listening is the basic of language study. According to Goh as cited in Hamouda, Dzlistening difficulties are defined as the internal and external characteristic that might interrupt text understanding and real life processing problem directly related to cognitive procedures that take place at various stages of listening comprehension. According to some experts as cited in Hamouda and Essays, there are some problems in listening comprehension: Boyle classifies the factors influencing listening comprehension and directly related to EFL listening into four inter-relating categories: listener, speaker, medium and environment factors. Aside from these, Chang, Chang, and Kuo discovered five major listening difficulties: speed, a cluster of sounds difficult for segmentation, obsession with the translation, association of sounds with words and meanings, and idiomatic expressions. Apart from those difficulties, there are some strategies proposed by some experts that can be applied to overcome the problems. According to Oxford, listening strategies are one of the ways which makes successful in listening comprehension. Strategies will be thought as the ways in which a learner approaches and manages a task, and listeners can be taught effective ways of approaching and managing their listening.

DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Language is distinguished into two types, namely, spoken language and written language. Listening and Speaking are identified as spoken language, while Reading and Writing are identified as written language. Many people around the world want to be able to communicate fluently in English without acknowledging the fact that they must also learn other English abilities. As a result, much of the language-teaching effort is focused on teaching students how to master English conversation while overlooking the significance of including a variety of other spoken languages in a language course, particularly when teaching listening comprehension. This may be one of the many reasons why people find listening to English difficult (Rintaningrum, 2018a). Furthermore, English for Indonesian students is considered as a foreign language, not a second language [2]. This means that Indonesian students will typically use English only at schools and in other particular settings. Consequently, the students, especially the remote students, do not have many practical opportunities to use English outside the classroom compared to those who live in big cities. This condition makes English teaching challenging. Having little contact with other English speakers, Indonesian students are not motivated to master spoken or written English. Moreover, the EFL students do not experience four linguistic skills in balance, namely reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills in real contexts (Rintaningrum, 2018b) [3].

There are a lot of challenges which are students face to in listening comprehension.

a) Accent

According to Goh (1999), one of the most important aspects affecting listener comprehension is a speaker's accent. Unfamiliar accents, both native and non-native, can cause major listening comprehension problems, whereas familiarity with an accent improves learner's comprehension.

b) Unfamiliar Vocabulary



EFL learners may struggle to unfamiliar words and sentences. When students may understand the meaning of the words, it can help improve their listening skills and also motivate them.

c) Length and Speed of Listening.

According to Underwood (1989), there are some barriers to effective listening comprehension process [5]. First, listeners cannot control the speed of speech. The biggest problem with listening comprehension is that listeners are not able to control how quickly speakers talk. Second, listeners cannot have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them. Students cannot replay a recording section. Teachers decide what and when to repeat listening texts and it is very difficult for teachers to know whether their learners understood what they have heard. Third, listeners do not have high vocabulary knowledge. Speakers may select words that listeners do not know them. Listeners may face an unfamiliar word which can stop them and think about the meaning of that word for a while and miss the next part of the speech. In addition, they have lack of spelling words which are important for listening comprehension. Many students do not know how to spelling words in writing and this problem can cause bad effect their listening skill.

LISTENING TASKS

More effective than traditional comprehension questions are the current practice of providing a task where learners do something with the information they have extracted from the text. Tasks can involve labelling (e.g., buildings on a map), selecting (e.g., choosing a films from three trailers,) form filling (e.g., a hotel registration form), and a completing grid.

Some kind of pre-listening activity is now usual, involving brainstorming vocabulary, reviewing areas of grammar, or discussing the topic of listening text among EFL young learners. The phase of the lesson usually lasts longer than it should. A long pre-listening session shortens the time available for listening. It can also be counterproductive. Revising language points in advance encourages learners to focus on examples of these particular items when listening – sometimes at the expense of global meaning.

One should set two simple aims for the pre-listening period:

1. To provide sufficient context to match what would be available in real life.
2. To create motivation (perhaps by asking learners to speculate on what they will hear).

This can be achieved in as little as 5 minutes [6;7].

WAYS AND STAGES OF DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

In the secondary schools listening process play a crucial role among learners and also active learning process help students to acquire a certain level of listening skills.

Thus listening is a complex skill which deserves special attention. The teacher should realize what key task can be most essential for students, such as:

- prediction skills;
- scanning and skimming abilities;
- abilities for extracting detailed information;
- the ability to recognize function and discourse patterns;



Learners can use them to enhance their listening abilities. One of the students needs to devote more time to practicing English listening. The amount of time kids spend learning to listen in English is referred to as their time investment. Students get more comfortable with English as they improve their listening skills. Students can follow the method and pace with which speakers talk in English if they are familiar with what they hear. (Rintaningrum, 2018a) [9].

CONCLUSION

Listening is important not only in language learning but also in daily communication. However, the students seem to have problems with listening. Many problems, such as the time they spend on studying themselves is too little to improve the skill, the inappropriate strategies of learner, and also the listening material itself. The students should have much more exposure to variety of listening and learn the tips or strategies through each of their learning themselves. There is not an ideal method that fits all types of English classes. Here, the teachers play an important role how to select the suitable listening strategies and how to apply them into the listening task. Listening activities should be arranged from basic to more complex as the learners gain in English language.

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