

Unraveling Students' Strategies in Overcoming the Listening Comprehension Problems

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the listening comprehension strategy plays important role for students successfull to upgrade their listening test and TOEFL score as well. This aims to investigate deeply the students' strategies in overcoming listening comprehension problems. The descriptive qualitative method is applied toward the third semester students of English Education study program Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. This research took 51 students who have taken listening courseworks (listening 1 and 3). Data collection technique were conducted by giving questionnaires in the light of Rebbica's theory (1993); direct and indirect strategies. The results of study showed there were some problems faced by the third semester students in conducting listening comprehension test, such as unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structure, lack of concentration, pronunciation, obscure form of speech, long answer question, and accents. Whilst, most of students used cognitive strategy in overcoming their problem in listening comprehension. To sump up, students must to learn some listening strategies as an effort to anticipate their problems when conduct listening comprehension test.

Keywords: *listening comprehension, problems, strategies, students, English.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of important skills in learning English, this skill is very necessary within English communication and also catches the ideas of interlucotors especially native speakers. Within the communication process, for understanding the intention and purpose of communication, students must be able to listen clearly what is the interlocutors is being said. According to Guo and Wills (2006), listening is an aspect that underlies the development of a language", which indicates good at listening skills as an important role in communication activity. Moreover, in the context of listening learning especially English students, listening is a skill that should be mastered. As cited from Nunan (1998), he explains that listening is one of the basic skills that must be mastered, because this produces a communication more effective. For English students, there are some important components of communication that will be conducted namely speakers, listeners, and utterances. As listeners, they must understand what speaker is being conveyed, therefore they must listen and focus carefully on every sentence that is being spoken. Through listening course, students are guided and trained for catching what is the idea of interlocutor (Rost, 2002). Besides that, this can enhance their listening skill which can be applied in daily communication. Rebecca (1990)

explains the listening strategy can be used for making a succeed listening comprehension. Some types of listening strategies include memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Furthermore, related to this aspect, this still becomes a barrier for many students in learning English. Some researches findings showed many of English students who have difficulties in listening comprehension. Jiang (2009) has investigated some problems are faced by students in listening, such as pronunciation of speaker, accent, unfamiliar words, and less of focus. Similarly, the results of preliminary analysis (2019) toward sixth semester students of English education study program Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu that students still have difficulties in listening comprehension, such new vocabulary meaning, speed of speech of native speaker, and also less of focus.

Based on the explanation above, this aims to investigate how the students' problems and analyze what is the dominant strategy used by students in listening comprehension. These questions are not only focused on the aspect of difficulty, but also to investigate what the strategy used to overcome the problems in listening. Therefore, this study attempts to study in-depth what are students' problems and strategy to overcome their problem. Through this study is expected able to help students for upgrading their skill or score in listening comprehension.

In listening comprehension course, there are some problems that usually faced by students. As cited in Yagang (1993), "the main sources of students' difficulty in listening like messages, speakers, listeners, physical and gesture settings. Messages usually relates to the content as reflected from listening audio, it is the use of new vocabulary or unfamiliar words, which often makes students feel confused. From speakers as practiced through conversation; speakers have different ways of speaking and tone of speech as well, this often leads students very difficult to distinguish one word and another word which have similar sounds. Others, due to the lack of practice, this problem becomes a major cause of problems of listeners, as a result creates the flexibility of students in conducting listening. Moreover, physical setting, some problems related to physical settings such as noise of surrounding or recording itself, which further affect on students' listening comprehension. Similarly, Boyle (1984) who argues the main factors that influence students' problems in listening comprehension include the environment, speakers, and listeners. Furthermore, Hasan (2000) pointed out the problems of students in listening comprehension from the complex of language structure use, that is difficult to be understood, the length of dialogue, and some unknown words. Moreover, Underwood (1989) mentions the speed of speaker, this futher effects on; (1) students cannot listen correctly when the speaker speaks very fast, because listening audio is only played once, (1) Students cannot find unfamiliar words, (3) listening audio materials, students are not familiar with the material or context in audio of listening. In many cases, average students tend to focus on the fimiliar or interesting materials.

O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper (1989) stated the strategies in listening comprehension are used as the first step that helps students in the learning process, through this strategy the students can get and manage the

information that is being listened. They also claim that there are three types of listening strategies namely metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies. Rebecca (1990), in her book *Language Learning Strategies*, explains that there are two strategies in listening such as direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and compensation strategy. Whilst Indirect strategies relate to the metacognitive strategy, affective and social strategy. The complete explanations of both strategies as stated in the following:

Direct strategies, memory strategy is well-known as mnemonics. Memory strategy focuses on the making of storage of new information that they listen. In this strategy, the vocabulary is the most difficult component to manage in any language learning, because there are many different meanings. Although, some instructors think, vocabulary learning is an easy matter, but this in reality until today learning to remember much vocabulary to achieve fluency is still a serious problem for students. With this problem, memory strategy can help students overcome this problem, because this strategy allows students to remember verbal material and use it when they need it for communication. Based on the result of Fauzana's research (2016) memory strategy is the strategy that most often used by students.

According to Richard (2008), cognitive strategy is where students get or understand information, which is directly related to long-term memory, it means that the new information that they get can be useful later. The statement is also supported by Huy (2015), cognitive strategy allows students to be able to connect new information with information that they have known before. This strategy is expected to be able to take advantage of the input they get in the long-term. In this strategy, students need to make arrangements of words that have just been learned, take notes, summarize or highlight.

Compensation strategy allows students to use new languages directly even though they still have limited knowledge. In this strategy, someone usually guesses the meaning of a word that may have been foreign or they have never met before, not only learners of new languages but native speakers also do it when they hear a foreign word. Indirect Strategies Metacognitive strategies are self-learning strategies carried out by students. In this strategy, students form independently goals of the learning they are doing, and plan their learning process independently. The term affective is directly related to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. Students control their own emotion, attitudes, and made the motivation by their self in the learning process. According to Vandergrift (2007) in this strategy students carry out the learning process by communicating and collaborating with others. The strategies are included here: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.

B. Research Methodology

The design of this research is descriptive method. According to Atmowardoyo (2018), there is agreement between several methodological

researchers regarding this descriptive research term. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe in a real and systematic way the phenomena that exist in this study. In its process, these descriptive researchers can use several methods of data retrieval by using instruments such as test, questionnaire, interview, or even observation. It is aimed to describe students' strategies to overcome listening comprehension problem at English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The subjects of this research are 51 students of Third semester of English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu.

The instrument in this research used questionnaire, which describe students' strategies to overcome listening comprehension problems. The first instrument is about problems in listening comprehension as adapted from Arafat Hamouda. The questionnaire was designed after a review of the literature (Boyle, 1984; Yagang, 1994; Hasan, 2010; Underwood, 1989; Rubin, 1994; Yagang, 1994; Dunkel, 1991; factors that influence listening comprehension. The second instrument is structured based on the direct and indirect strategy in the light of Rebecca and L. Oxford. The researcher classifies the data detail by using the percentage formula of Herzberg

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

➤ Finding

This part presents will be divided into two sections. In the first section, the researchers described what students' problems in listening comprehension. While, for the second section, the researchers present the results of analysis toward students' strategies in listening comprehension. The results, some pieces of information based on the questionnaires given and vividly obtained the answers of research questions as have proposed in the introduction section.

1. Students' Problems in Listening Comprehension

According to the results of analysis toward questionnaires as given by researchers, this study found several problems of listening comprehension, which described from the pieces of information below. It is as stated from the following tables,

No	Statements	Negative	Positive
6	I find it difficult to understand every single word of listening audio.	0	100%
9	I find it difficult to understand audio listening because of its complex grammatical structure	0	100%
10	I find it difficult to infer the meaning of an unknown word while listening.	0	100%
13	I find it difficult to focus on audio listening, when I got the expected answers in my mind	0	100%
14	I find it difficult to concentrate because I search for the answers, and I listen to the listening materials at the same time	0	100%

17	I find it difficult to answer questions which require other than a short answer (why or how questions).	0	100%
19	I find it difficult to understand audio listening material that is only played once.	0	100%
21	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words, which are not pronounced clearly.	0	100%
22	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers in listening audio speak too fast	0	100%
24	It is difficult for me to concentrate with noises around.	0	100%

The table above described several aspects of listening comprehension that faced by third semester students of English education study program at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. Our analysis results toward questionnaires items were found ten major problems faced by students in learning listening, which is grouped by 10 questionnaire items above; these include (1) Aspect of vocabulary in listening audio; new words use and understanding the clue word of speaker. (2) Aspect of grammar use; students have difficulty to catch the idea of complex structure. (3) Obsecure form of listening audio; it has an effect on students way to decide the correct answers of multifle choice and infer the meaning of conversation. (4) Consentration; most students have difficult to keep their concentration while listening audio due to conversation very quickly.

2. Students' Strategies in Listening Comprehension

This part elaborated the descriptions of students' strategies in learning listening. Based on our analysis results were obtained the differences of percentage of strategies used. These were as stated from the following tables;

Direct Strategies

No.	Components of Direct Strategies	Frequency	
		Negative	Positive
1.	Memory	28%	72%
2.	Cognitive	16%	84%
3.	Compensation	26%	74%

Indirect Strategies

No.	Components of Indirect Strategies	Frequency	
		Negative	Positive
1.	Meta-cognitive	18%	82%
2.	Affective	22%	78%
3.	Social	25%	75%

The tables above vividly described from two strategies as used by students in listening comprehension where cognitive strategies got (84%), or dominant strategy is used by students in direct strategies. While, in indirect strategies, most of students were very good in meta-cognitive strategy, or (82%). Moreover, they were also good at affective strategy (78%), social strategy (75%), compensation strategy (74%), and memory strategies (72%).

➤ **Discussion**

As described above, the results of two research questions as proposed in Introduction section. In the first research question focusen on students' strategies to overcome listening comprehension problems. In the second research question investigated the dominant strategy used by students in overcoming their problems in listening comprehension. The research findings, there were some major problems faced by the third semester students in listening comprehension; unknown words, complex grammatical structure, lack of concentration, pronunciations, speed of speech, long answer question, noises from around, and accents. This finding has similar idea from the previous research by Arafat Hamouda (2012) who stated accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners. Similarly, Hasan (2000), the biggest problem in listening is the complex language structure to understand and some unknown words. Hamouda's finding (2012), during the process of learning listening, students are difficult to keep their concentration. His finding was 88.3% students took longer time to find out the answer of question. On the other hand, Yagang (1993) states that the main sources of difficulties in listening; not all speakers have the same way of speaking and tone of speech, sometimes the ways of speaking speakers in audio that make students confused to distinguish the words which have the same sounds, and some problems related to the surrounding environment and recording itself.

The first research question regards to the strategies used by students to overcome their problems in listening comprehension. The researchers found students used variety of listening strategies like cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, compensation strategies, and memory strategies. As stated by Tersta (2012), each strategy used by students based on their learning experiences. For example, students prefer learning from audio material, like listening music or watching movies, whilst reading the subtitles to make them better understand at meaning and also make them become more familiar with words.

The second research question is to know the dominant strategies used by students' to overcome their problems in listening comprehension. The result shows that the dominant strategies used by students is cognitive strategy. Rebecca (1990) argues this strategy is really important in learning. She also adds the cognitive strategy is typically to be most popular strategies amongst language learners. Goh (1998) also supports that cognitive strategies help learners to make strength associations between their new and already learned information. These statements supported by statement of Richard (2008) that cognitive strategy is students' understanding of

information given, which is directly related to long-term memory, it is new information that they get can be useful later.

D. CONCLUSION

The result of discussion some major problems faced by third semester students in listening comprehension; unknown words, complex grammatical structure, lack of concentration, pronunciations, speed of speech, long answer question, noises from around, and accents. And the dominant strategy used by students is cognitive strategy from direct strategy. This covers the strategy to analyze and find out the reasons especially in translating. It is expected the results of this study can contribute for improving students' skill in the teaching listening comprehension in higher education.

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