

Students' Difficulties in doing Listening Section of TOEFL Test

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Abstract

This research objectives are to investigate the students' difficulties in doing listening section of TOEFL Test and to investigate the most dominant students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test. The design of this research was a descriptive quantitative research, because in this research, the researcher described the students' difficulties of listening section on TOEFL Test at sixth semester English education program. Subject of the research was the whole students of the sixth semester of English Language Education Study Program of UMB Bengkulu Academic Year 2021/2022. There were 20 students as the sample of this research. The instruments of this research were questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire is a list of question that describe of something. The questionnaire was designed based on Fitria (2021) theory who divided the students difficulties into; internal factors and external factors. There are two findings of this research; First, the students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu are including internal factors and external factors. Second, the most dominant students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was external factor. The dominant external factors were speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill, the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects the TOEFL Listening skill, and audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when Listening TOEFL.

Keywords : Difficulties in doing Listening Section, TOEFL Test

Introduction

TOEFL has become one of the importance requirements to University students since it was determined as the requirement for academic demands. At University of Bengkulu, TOEFL is also offered to students before they followed the research paper test. The test is usually carried out orderly when they are at the sixth grade. start from sixth semester the students should follow TOEFL test administered by the university as requirement to be able to make a thesis (SK Rektor No.174-sk/r.01-UMB/2015). According to Samad et al (2107) "TOEFL is an international test is commonly used to measure the level of students' competence in mastering English". It means that the students should get standard score depend on the expectation if they want to become graduates of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. TOEFL examines language skills that are tailored to the academic and professional fields. These fields are packaged and divided into sections. TOEFL test usually consists of three sections with 140 questions. TOEFL includes

three aspects, namely (1) Listening Comprehension, (2) Structure and Written Expression, (3) Reading Comprehension. The TOEFL test always starts with Listening Comprehension consisting of Part A, B, and C, then followed by Structure and Written Expression consisting of Part A and B, and the last is Reading Comprehension.

Based on the preliminary data on 29th may 2022, the researcher did interview to five students at sixth semester English Study Program of UMB who followed TOEFL Test, the interview result showed that three from five students as the respondents got difficulties in listening section. As respondent 1 said that she got difficult in understanding vocabulary, grammar, context, accent or pronunciation, and interesting skill conclusions. Another students also said that some other things that often become problems when facing the TOEFL listening test include not understanding the topic, foreign words, nervousness, being unfamiliar with diction and grammar, repetitions and pauses, wide imagination, and missing detailed information, lack of concentration, lack of understanding of English accents, interpret word for word, lack of knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation, unable to distinguish certain words and sounds. The result of this preliminary data showed that mostly the students got difficulties in TOEFL test especially in listening section.

The listening comprehension section aims to test our abilities in understanding spoken language. However, to be able to understand spoken language in addition to having to get used to listening to English spoken, we must know English grammar (grammar) adequately. All sentences in this section use the same sentence grammatical (grammatically correct) and usually in the form of a complete sentence. All these sentences are pronounced in conversational English. According to Ang-zie (2020), to answer listening comprehension questions well, we are required to have the skill to understand the stress and tone, understand the difference in sound, understand idioms, understand conversational phrases, understanding groups or verb phrases, find implied information (not clearly stated), understand comparisons, and understand the meaning of the conversation or conversation. The listening section is divided into separately timed parts. They are short conversations, long conversations, and talks/monologues. In each part, we will listen to the audio-only one time (Putlack et al., 2020). Stirling (2017) also mentions that listening section used to measure the students' skill in understanding the authentic speech patterns both in academic (formal) and non-academic (informal) situations. Listening Comprehension (50 questions, 30-40 minutes). According to (Fitria, 2021), listening section includes about listener concentration in listening to conversations and monologues in English. The conversations consist of short conversations, long conversations, and speeches. Structure and Written Expression (40 questions, 25 minutes). Based on the explanation above, the researcher will conduct a research entitled "A study of students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu".

Research Methodology

The design of this research was a descriptive quantitative research, because in this research, the researcher described the students' difficulties of listening section on TOEFL Test at sixth semester English education program

of University Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. Subject of the research was the whole students of the sixth semester of English Language Education Study Program of UMB Bengkulu Academic Year 2021/2022. There were 20 students as the sample of this research. The instruments of this research were questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire is a list of question that describe of something. The questionnaire was designed based on Fitria (2021) theory who divided the students difficulties into; internal factors and external factors. All of the students were asked to fulfill the questionnaire based on their experience in answering TOEFL listening questions. The interview was used to confirm the result of the questionnaire. The researcher described the data of this research in the finding subbab and the researcher discussed the findings. The data description was needed to describe the result of this research.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

After the participants answered the questionnaire, the researcher collected the data of the questionnaire then analyzed it by using percentage formula which is attached in previous chapter. Moreover, based on the data analysis procedure the questionnaire result was divided into two categories; positive and negative response.

1. The Students' Difficulties of Listening Section on TOEFL Test

External factors are elements that influence someone's performance from the outside.

Table 1 The Meanscore of External Factors

No	External Factors	Responses							
		Positive				Negative			
		Always 4		Usually 3		Seldom 2		Never 1	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The speaker's accent disturbs your TOEFL Listening skill.	3	15%	8	40%	5	25%	4	20%
2	Speakers' speed disturbs your TOEFL Listening skill.	3	15%	11	55%	6	30%	0	0%
3	Speakers' intonation/emphasis disturbs your TOEFL Listening skill.	5	25%	9	45%	5	25%	1	5%

4	The speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence disturbs your TOEFL Listening skill.	3	15%	6	30%	9	45%	2	10%
5	The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker disturbs your TOEFL listening skill.	2	10%	9	45%	8	40%	1	5%
6	The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it disturbs your TOEFL Listening skill	4	20%	11	55%	5	25%	0	0%
7	Audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when you are Listening TOEFL.	4	20%	10	50%	4	20%	2	10%
	Mean	3	17%	9	46%	6	30%	2	7%

Table 1 showed that there were seven items of external factors. For the first factor, there were 15% the students answer always, 40% of the students usually, 25% seldom, and 20% never got difficult which the speaker's accent disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. Then there were 15% always, 55% usually, 30% seldom, no never of students usually got speakers' speed disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. There were 25% always, 45% usually, 25% seldom, and 5% seldom of students who usually got that speakers' intonation/emphasis disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. Moreover, there were 15% always, 30% usually, 45% seldom, and 10% never of students seldom got the speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. There were 10% always, 45% of usually, 40% seldom, and 5% never of students usually got the choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker disturbs their TOEFL listening skill. There were 20% always, 55% usually, 25% seldom, and no never of students got difficult on the sentence structure

which conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. There were 20% always, 50% of students usually, 20% of seldom, and 10% of never student got audio interruption which makes the audio sounds less/unclear when they are Listening TOEFL. To sum up, there were 46% of students usually got external factors as the difficulty in listening section.

The internal factors refer to anything within the students and under the control of the students no matter whether they are tangible or intangible. These factors after being figured out are grouped into the weaknesses of the students in listening section of TOEFL Test.

Table 2. The Meanscore of Internal Factors

No	Internal Factors	Responses							
		Positive				Negative			
		Always		Usually		Seldom		Never	
		4		3		2		1	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
8	Ever having previous experience doing TOEFL test before	5	25%	9	45%	4	20%	2	10%
9	Lack of practice in listening to TOEFL	5	25%	7	35%	5	25%	3	15%
10	Limited time in doing TOEFL listening test	5	25%	10	50%	4	20%	1	5%
11	A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions	5	25%	10	50%	4	20%	1	5%
12	Have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL	3	15%	10	50%	5	25%	2	10%
13	Have memory limitations when listening to the TOEFL	5	25%	8	40%	6	30%	1	5%
14	Lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to the TOEFL	1	5%	8	40%	9	45%	2	10%

15	Lack of concentration/ focus when listening to TOEFL	2	10%	8	40%	9	45%	1	5%
16	Have limited mastery of foreign / unfamiliar vocabulary when listening	3	15%	9	45%	7	35%	1	5%
17	The appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL	2	10%	7	35%	10	50%	1	5%
18	Easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL	3	15%	10	50%	6	30%	1	5%
19	Tend to interpret any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL	3	15%	13	65%	3	15%	1	5%
20	Have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL	3	15%	7	35%	9	45%	1	5%
21	Busy alone with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things	2	10%	8	40%	8	40%	2	10%
	Mean	3	17%	9	44%	6	32%	2	7%

In the Table above, it showed that there were thirteen items of internal factors. For the first factor, mostly (45%) of the students usually ever having

previous experience doing TOEFL test before. Then dominantly (35%) of students usually were lack of practice in listening to TOEFL. There were 50% of student usually got limited time in doing TOEFL listening test. There were 50% of them usually got a lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions. There were also 50% of them usually have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL. There were 40% of them usually have memory limitations when listening to the TOEFL. There were 45% of them seldom got lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to the TOEFL and lack of concentration/focus when listening to TOEFL. There were 45% of the students usually have limited mastery of foreign / unfamiliar vocabulary when listening. There were 50% of them seldom having the appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL

There were 50% of the students usually got easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL. There were 65% of them usually got tend to interpret any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL. There were 40% of them seldom have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL. And there were 40% of the students were usually busy alone with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things. To conclude, there were 44% of students usually got internal factors as the difficulty in listening section.

Here is the summary of questionnaire result related to the students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test.

Table 3 Summary of Students' Difficulties in Listening Section of TOEFL Test

No	Difficulties	Positive	Negative
		Always+Usually	Seldom+Never
1	External Factors	63%	37%
2	Internal Factors	61%	39%

The percentages in positive and negative column are found from the amount of percentages always and usually for positive column, seldom and never for negative column. The percentages are got based on previous tables of each sources. The summary of the questionnaire result revealed that there were 63%of students always feel that external factors as the cause of difficulties in listening section while rest of them, 61% students always feel that internal factors as the difficulties factor. Therefore, the dominant factor of students' diffulties in listening section was external factor. there were two factors cause the students are difficulty in doing TOEFL listening in both external and internal factors. In external factors, they are: 1) The speaker's accent impacts the TOEFL Listening skill. 2) Speakers' speed affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 3) Speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 4) The speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 5) The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker affects your TOEFL listening skill. 6) The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects the TOEFL Listening skill. 7) Audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when Listening TOEFL.

Discussion

Based on the questionnaire analysis result, there were two findings of this research, they were; First, the students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu are including internal factors and external factors. Second, the most dominant students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was external factor.

The questionnaire result also found that there were three main items which becomes the dominant ones of external factors in students' difficulty of listening TOEFL test. First, the speakers' intonation/emphasis disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. Second, the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. And third, audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when they are Listening TOEFL.

To know the reasons why those three items became the dominant factors of students' difficulty in listening test, the researcher did an interview to three respondents or students who have answered the questionnaire. Regarding to the interview result, the student 1 answered that the speakers' intonation/emphasis disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill because lack of pronunciation knowledge of the students so that they felt confuse about what the speakers talk about in listening test. Student 2 got difficult because she got confused to understand what sentences which said by the speaker. Sometimes the speaker emphasizes useless word so that I got confused. Student 3 said that she did not master the intonation of the native speaker well so that it impacts her listening skill.

The second dominant factor is the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it disturbs their TOEFL Listening skill. Student 1 also admitted that lack of structure knowledge toward the complex structure of sentence in listening test becomes the reason why this item be the dominant factor of difficulty in listening skill. Student 2 admitted it was difficult because she usually use simple sentences in daily activity while learning English so that when she listened a complex one she got confused. Student 3 answered that the language used by the speaker is too complex because in the learning English at campus she only learned the basic ones, it makes her difficult to understand the sentence in listening skill.

The third dominant factor is audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when they are Listening TOEFL. Student 1 answered that with an unclear sound of listening TOEFL they often found difficulty to answer the listening question. Student 2 answered that if the audio is unclear, she got confused to understand what the speaker says. Student 3 admitted that unclear audio can disturb her concentration while doing listening test.

This research result was confirmed from some experts. According to Yagang in (Agustika et al., 2021), the listening comprehension process is also a relatively complex psychological process. In psychology, it is stated that when a person feels nervous or anxious he or she may not be concentrated. When one felt uncomfortable, his or her ability to listen is greatly reduced. Boredom and frustration are other barriers to listening comprehension. Boredom and frustration may affect the extent to which attention is paid to listening.

Regarding to Fitria (2021) study result, there were two factors cause the students are difficulty in doing TOEFL listening in both external and internal factors. In external factors, they are: 1) The speaker's accent impacts the TOEFL Listening skill. 2) Speakers' speed affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 3) Speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 4) The speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 5) The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker affects your TOEFL listening skill. 6) The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects the TOEFL Listening skill. 7) Audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when Listening TOEFL.

In internal factors, they are: 1) Do not have previous experience doing TOEFL test before. 2) Have a lack of practice in listening to TOEFL. 3) Have limited time in doing the TOEFL listening test. 4) A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions. 5) Have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL. 6) Have memory limitations when listening to TOEFL. 7) Lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to TOEFL. 8) Lack of concentration or focus when listening to TOEFL. 9) Have limited mastery of foreign or unfamiliar vocabulary when listening. 10) The appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL. 11) Easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL. 12) Tend to translate any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL. 13) Have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL. 14) Busy alone with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things.

Moreover, the result of this research was also in line with some previous studies. First, a research entitled "Students Difficulties in Passing Listening Section in TOEFL Prediction Test" written by (Chairuddin & Ulfa, 2018). This research is to recognize difficulties for learners in passing the TOEFL prediction test listening portion. It is found that there are many facets of student issues, and the most difficult items are: 1) capture the idea of the speaker, 2) recognize the idiomatic language, 3) define the coherent marker, 4) give the utterance a literal meaning, 5) retain the important details.

Second, a research entitled "An Analysis of the Difficulties Encountered by Non-English Department Students in TOEFL Test of Listening Section" written by (Pratiwi, 2017). This research was largely aimed at exploring the difficulties of students listening to the TOEFL exam. The outcome of this study reveals that in the listening portion of the TOEFL exam, the recapitulation score of the students was weak, by percentage 60 percent of students include 9 students of fifteen participants are very low understanding, and 40 percent of students include 6 students are low understanding. This suggests that the students are not comfortable with the TOEFL exam.

In the third research entitled "Analyzing Students' TOEFL Listening Comprehension Test Performance" written by (Yuliandani et al., 2017). The goal of this analysis is to figure out the most challenging part of the TOEFL listening interpretation and to find out the problematic aspects. Double negative expressions (23 percent) are the most problematic aspect, while the most perfected aspect is passive (77 percent). The most troublesome aspect in discussions and talks is the subject matter and accurate knowledge is the mastered aspect.

In the fourth research entitled "Students' Difficulties and Strategies in Doing Listening Section On TOEFL-Like Test" written by (Pujiana, 2017). This analysis is to discover the problems encountered by the students and the approach they used in the TOEFL test listening segment. The effect is that the listening section is not simple for them and that part C (lecture) is the most difficult part of the listening section. The result reveals that students interpret attention, keywords, time, and emphasis as issues. The students usually used some techniques to solve the challenge. And the last, a research by Fitria (2021) entitled "An Analysis of the Students' Difficulties in TOEFL Prediction Test of Listening Section". The result shows that the students' difficulty in doing TOEFL listening both external and internal factors. In external factors.

Conclusion and Sugesstion

Conclusion

Based on the findings, there are two conclusions of this research; First, the students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu are including internal factors and external factors. Second, the most dominant students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL Test in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu was external factor. The dominant external factors were speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill, the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects the TOEFL Listening skill, and audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when Listening TOEFL.

Suggestion

Based on the previous conclusion, the researcher give suggestion that students can prepare themselves when they want to do test TOEFL. They should know the difficulties in doing TOEFL Test. After that it will be a good lesson for the next step when they want to do the TOEFL test.

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