
Factors Causing the Students' Problems in Listening Skills at The Eight Semester of English Study Program of Madako University

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Abstrak: Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan mahasiswa mengalami kesulitan dalam keterampilan mendengarkan di semester delapan Program Studi Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Madako. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti berfokus pada faktor-faktor yang menghambat mahasiswa dalam keterampilan mendengarkan, termasuk bagaimana mahasiswa mengatasi hambatan tersebut. Responden penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester delapan Program Studi Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Madako. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif di mana peneliti mengumpulkan data menggunakan teknik wawancara langsung. Untuk memperoleh data dan hasil penelitian dari mahasiswa yang menjadi sumber berdasarkan temuan peneliti, ditemukan beberapa faktor yang menyebabkan masalah bagi mahasiswa dalam proses keterampilan mendengarkan. Yaitu 1. Perbedaan Budaya, 2. Kualitas Materi Rekaman, 3. Kosakata yang Tidak Familiar, 4. Durasi dan Kecepatan Mendengarkan, 5. Kondisi Fisik, 6. Masalah yang Berkaitan dengan Kebisingan, 7. Kurang Konsentrasi.

Kata Kunci: Faktor-faktor penyebab; masalah siswa dalam mendengarkan; masalah dalam keterampilan mendengarkan.

Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to determine the factors causing students to experience difficulties in listening skills in the eighth semester English Language Study Program, Madako University. In this study, the researcher focused on the factors that hinder students in listening skills, including how students overcome these obstacles. The respondents of this study were eighth semester English Language Study Program students, Madako University. This study is a qualitative descriptive study where the researcher collected data using direct interview techniques. To obtain data and research results from students who were sources based on the researcher's findings, several factors were found that caused problems for students in the listening skills process. Namely 1. Cultural Differences, 2. Quality of Recording Materials, 3. Unfamiliar Vocabulary, 4. Length and Speed of Listening, 5. Physical Condition, 6. Noise-Related Problems, 7. Lack of Concentration.*

Keywords: *Factors causing; the students' problems in listening; problems in listening skill.*

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INTRODUCTION

In English learning, listening skills are basic skills that must be mastered before speaking skills. This skill is important because students need to listen to native speakers to understand

how to pronounce words before they speak. One effective way to improve the quality of listening skills is to listen to more recordings of conversations in English or watch movies or videos with English subtitles. By involving students in this activity, they will be more trained in understanding listening materials. However, in practice, teaching listening skills is often neglected by English teachers. Although listening is one of the four main skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) which are key to mastering a language, this skill is the least developed. In Indonesia, teachers tend to skip teaching listening even though this skill is included in the curriculum. Reasons often given include lack of teaching materials, limited school facilities, difficult-to-follow speaking speed in recordings, and students' lack of understanding of the vocabulary and sentence structures used in recordings. Listening skills play an important role in supporting students' ability to receive information at school, work, family, and society. Vandergrift (1999) stated that listening comprehension is a complex process that actively involves the listener to recognize sounds, understand vocabulary, grammatical structures, and interpret intonation. In addition, listening skills also require high concentration and openness to understand other people's perspectives.

Based on the results of observations at Madako University, it was found that many students, especially in the eighth semester of the English Study Program, had difficulty in listening skills. This is the main concern in this study entitled "Factors Causing Problems in Listening Skills of Students in the Eighth Semester of the English Study Program at Madako University." This study aims to identify the factors that cause low listening skills of students and provide relevant solutions to improve these skills. The objective of this research is to know what the factors are causing the students problems in listening skills at eighth semester English study program of Madako University.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach, emphasizing the analysis of phenomena and the meanings embedded within them. As Basri (2014) highlights, qualitative methods focus on processes and outcomes, making them suitable for exploring human behavior, interactions, and experiences. This study employs purposive sampling to select participants, specifically targeting eighth-semester English students at Madako University who face challenges in listening comprehension.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study were obtained from data collection carried out using three data collection techniques, namely first, data collection was carried out using observation guidelines where researchers made several observations related to the factors causing student problems in listening skills in the eighth semester English study program at Madako University Tolitoli. second, data collection was carried out using interview guidelines where researchers conducted questions and answers directly or online, and third, data collection was carried out using documentation guidelines used to complete observation and interview data to collect data that researchers did not obtain from the results of observations and interviews. Indicators related to citation of research results are based on the theory put forward by Raihan Maulida 2018. The completion of the thesis in this study consists of seven indicators, namely, 1. Cultural Differences 2. Quality of Recording Materials 3. Less Familiar Vocabulary 4. Length and Speed of Listening 5.

Physical Condition 6. Problems Related to Noise and 7. Lack of Concentration. After interviewing all respondents, the author drew the main points based on their answers. The details of the points analyzed are as follows:

Problems in Learning Listening

Based on the the eight students interviewed, almost all of them had experienced problems in listening skills according to the seven indicators of this research theory.

A). Cultural differences

In this first indicator, of the eight students interviewed, almost all of them answered that the difference in accents in the listening process greatly affected their listening ability. Some also said that the difference in accents made them confused in grasping the meaning of a word.

Initial A.S said:

"Cultural diversity is a characteristic or heritage obtained from ancestors or forefathers."

"English accents have their own characteristics that affect the quality of our hearing, there are some words in English that are pronounced differently, so they can affect the way we understand."

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"Cultural diversity because there are many cultures but all are one."

"The difference in accents is very influential because from my own experience I don't understand if someone uses a different accent."

As said by a FH student:

"the culture of foreigners is more indifferent, while in our country they always smile and greet."

"can reduce the understanding of listening to English when the pronunciation is different so with what I get the pronunciation is a bit different."

A student named NSA said:

"Cultural diversity is the difference in background, ethnicity, language, customs, religion, etc."

"differences in accent affect pronunciation in English, so sometimes it is repeated to ensure/recognize the words spoken."

Likewise, a student with initial NQ said:

"Cultural diversity is the uniqueness of human works that exist in everyday life and have diverse cultures."

"very influential, accents that are not clearly pronounced are one of the obstacles in listening"

Student RA said:

"Very influential because easy-to-understand materials are our supporters in the listening process."

"Good quality materials can make it easier for us to listen and can help us in the listening process."

Student J.A said that:

"Cultural diversity is a characteristic that exists in humans."

"Yes, the difference in English accents can affect our listening ability. Not everyone is able to understand different English accents."

As for student N.K said

"Cultural diversity is the existence of various cultures that live side by side in one society/community."

"Sometimes their pronunciation is unclear, and they speak very fast so that sometimes it is difficult to understand what they are saying."

B). Quality of Recorder Materials

On this second indicator many students agree that the quality of the material affects their listening ability.

Initial A.S said

"It is clear that the quality of the material greatly affects the listening process, because if the quality of the material taught is good or the sound produced is good, it makes it easier for the listener to understand the material."

"We can see from which perspective the understanding he gets from a material."

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"Of course it is very influential because if the material delivered is not clear, it will be difficult to receive acceptable information."

"Quality is very influential when I listen to what is delivered. That's all."

As said by a FH student:

"Yes, of course, because the quality of the material can affect the listening process more"

"Yes, I like listening to vocabulary, there are some words that are difficult to find, it confuses me so it can bother me."

Student NSA said:

"Yes, very much, good, appropriate/relevant material certainly makes it easier for us to learn."

"I make sure to use relevant material. For example, taking recordings with good quality (clearly audible) trains hearing, the content of the material is also adjusted to ability."

Another student NQ said:

"Very influential because easy-to-understand materials support us in the listening process."

"Good quality materials can make it easier for us to listen in the listening process."

A student named RA said:

"Of course. The quality of the material greatly affects my ability to listen."

"If the quality of the material is poor, it will be difficult to listen and understand, like a clear voice will be very easy to understand."

Student J.A said that:

"Yes, because in the material there are usually instructions on how we can understand the intent or meaning of the sentences we hear."

"ask a friend to explain again the important points of the material that has been given."

As for student N.K said:

"Yes, of course it has a big influence. Starting from the audio, the pronunciation, the pronunciation must be clear so that it is easier to understand."

“Check the clarity of the audio, the use of language, whether it is in accordance with our abilities or not.”

C). Unfamiliar vocabulary

This indicator also makes some students confused, especially when the listening process is taking place. Students find it difficult when they encounter words that they have just heard for the first time or that other people rarely say, so that students do not know the meaning of the word.

Initial A.S said:

“Usually I will try to focus on the word trying to figure out what it means or I will write down the vocabulary.”

“For me, I will listen to the words from the beginning usually there are clues given so we can know there will be a core message either in the middle, at the end or at the beginning.”

A student with initial J.I.G said:

“It's not too distracting, but if I hear a word I don't know, I still carry on and remember the word I didn't know, then look it up to match the meaning.”

“As I said earlier, I keep listening and then I find out the vocabulary that I don't recognize.”

As said by a FH student:

“Of course it makes me confused, I usually ask my friends what this is like because I just heard it.”

“the solution, we have to learn about vocabulary recognition, memorize more vocabulary to overcome the problem.”

One of the students named NSA said that:

“write it down and then look for the meaning”

“I don't really focus on each word when listening, but focus on the context that is conveyed.”

A student with the initials NQ added:

“By prioritizing what is known first and repeating it, and listening to the speaker's intonation.”

“I do it by trying to repeat it and asking friends who know more, and prioritizing what is understood first.”

RA said that:

“I write down the vocabulary again and find out what the meaning or significance of the vocabulary is.”

“I connect other vocabulary so that I reach the conclusion of the message.”

Student J.A said that:

“I usually repeat the audio several times to make sure the answer is correct.”

“I usually just write down a few sentences that I hear and conclude it myself.”

As for student N.K said:

“Ask the speaker directly to ask for an explanation again for words that I don't know.”

“Write down the vocabulary, then I will ask about the vocabulary I don't know or look it up on the internet after class is over.”

D). Length and Speed of Listening

In this indicator, many students have experienced it and some students are unable to overcome it, therefore students must know how to resolve the factors causing this problem as per the results of interviews conducted by researchers, namely:

Initial A.S said:

"I will focus on words that are usually repeated or often spoken or even words that we are familiar with."

"By actively listening we will be more focused on a situation and we can obtain information."

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"I try to focus as much as possible so I can understand."

"Usually I will listen to the main part and only pay attention to the parts that I can understand."

As said by a FH student:

"Yes, it's very annoying, I don't study enough so that's what makes me confused to overcome that speed."

"If it's fast and short I can't answer, I mean I don't really understand, it's very annoying."

Student NSA said:

"Focus on the message delivered, note down important things or main points only".

"Focus and make sure there are no distractions while listening"

Another student NQ said:

"By focusing on what the speaker says, listening carefully, and using facial expressions and body movements as a support to capture important information."

"Usually by asking again, or previously paying close attention to what is being conveyed."

A student named RA said:

"First I have to know what the purpose or title of the speech is, so that if the speech is delivered at high speed I can understand the information from the speech."

"I avoid noise and listen carefully to the information delivered."

Student J.A said that:

"I will only listen from the middle of the speech to the end."

"focus your listening well so that the information received can be understood."

As for student N.K said:

"Just by catching a few key points or one word that I understand, I already get the information that is being conveyed."

"Just focus on listening to the information, or by recording it so that I can listen to it again."

E). Physical Condition

According to Bloomfield et al. (2011), noise or distortion in the audio signal interferes with listening comprehension for listeners. Sometimes discomfort in the classroom affects students' listening comprehension. In large classrooms, students sitting in the back row may not hear the recording because of students sitting in the front. Therefore, researchers found several students who had problems according to this indicator.

Initial A.S said:

"That is by focusing on the information we hear to be more focused and also note down the important things we get.

"If there are rules in the class, maybe the rules are conveyed so that friends can obey them, then build good communication in the class and provide support so that the situation in the class is more ideal."

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"As much as possible I try to minimize the noise or if not I will try to stay focused."

"For things like that we can try how to make this listening run smoothly, I will try to stay focused, I can use existing tools such as a cellphone to record."

As said by a FH student:

"Of course it is very distracting during the listening process, so we have to really focus, so when there is noise, the noise makes us lose focus"

"The way I deal with that is by moving to a quieter place that is more efficient for studying so we can focus again."

Student NSA said:

"asking for repetition, sometimes asking for the audio volume to be increased/if the individual is using earphones/headphones, or to move away from the noisy area."

"trying to stay focused.

Another student NQ said:

"By focusing on the speech and the speaker, listening well, and facial expressions and body movements are supporting so that we can capture important information."

"Usually by asking again, or previously paying close attention to what is being conveyed"

A student named RA said:

"By finding out what is causing the noise and can be eliminated or waiting until the time is really quiet and can listen well."

"If the class is less than ideal, it will greatly affect the listening process which is very disturbing so that it cannot be heard."

Student J.A said that:

"Of course, ask your friends to lower their voices or stop activities that make us less focused."

"find a new, quiet room so you can stay focused"

As for student N.K said:

"wear earphones, but if it is not possible, try to move to a quieter place."

"just adapt to the classroom environment, find a sitting position that I think is comfortable, make it as comfortable as possible."

F). Noise Related Problems

Noise is another environmental barrier to comprehension. Noise both inside and outside the classroom is a barrier to comprehension. Noise, including background noise on recordings and ambient noise, can distract listeners from the content of the reading. They certainly will not get good results in listening. First, they are distracted by noise no matter how hard they try to focus on the task. Otherwise, the noise will produce a complex sound instead of the solo

recording being played. This distracts students from listening and focusing on the task (Hamouda, 2013). In this indicator, students explained that:

Initial A.S said

"The steps I usually take are to train my concentration. Usually I get used to watching English films so that it reduces noise and can also understand the information and don't forget that the meaning of the words in the film can be applied in life"

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"Actually for external noise, from my experience I have never been through that so I don't know how to overcome it."

As said by a FH student:

"Yes to overcome the noise problem, yes, that's what I said before, we return to a place that makes us more focused on studying to get more optimal results."

Student NSA said:

"The same as the physical condition of this class, using hearing aids such as headphones/earphones, going to a place that is not noisy, asking for repetition, focusing on noting down important points."

Another student NQ said:

"By ignoring the noise and focusing on the listening process, the final step I took was to just ignore it."

A student named RA added to:

"when I want to get information and understand what I hear, I take a place with less noise and listen to it repeatedly so that my understanding is optimal."

Student J.A said that:

"just trying to stay focused and not care about what's happening outside."

As for student N.K said:

"Find a safe and suitable place, the important thing is that the place is right, use Earpods to be more focused, the concrete step is to listen carefully and focus, note down important points while listening."

G). Lack of concentration

On this indicator is no longer foreign to students, namely lack of concentration, this problem is usually faced by students because the length and complexity of the listening process make students' concentration often destroyed. And when their concentration is destroyed some of them find it difficult to refocus and some have their own way to concentrate again.

Initial A.S said

"For me, the way to overcome difficulties in concentrating on listening is of course by building enthusiasm and motivation within oneself to build a better self-identity so that we can focus on our goals."

"How far do we listen or hear a speech with full understanding and also more concentration."

A student with initial J.I.G said:

"The first thing I do is take a breath, try to calm myself down, and refocus."

"Making sure that I stay focused on a long, complicated speech is very difficult because just listening to the speech is very difficult."

As said by a FH student:

"And the solution, for example, when I'm sleepy, I immediately wash my face so my mind can focus again like that."

Student NSA said:

"trying to be calmer and stay focused and make sure I am ready to listen."

"taking notes of important points that are conveyed, noting down any new foreign vocabulary that I have come across, summarizing all the points that I have noted previously."

Another student NQ said:

"Dengan pergi dari tempat kebisingan, dan menegurnya, jika tidak mengabaikan saja."

"Dengan melihat pembicara dengan baik, dan mendengarkan intonasi serta mimik muka pembicara."

A student named RA added to:

"I will spend some time in the listening process or by dealing with external distractions."

"I will make sure that I pay attention, focus only on the speech and not be distracted by other sounds."

As said by the respondent on behalf of JA:

"The first thing I do is take a breath and try to calm myself down and try to refocus my mind. Another way I usually do this is by recording or writing down things that are important to me."

Student J.A said that:

"usually asks for repetition and refocuses on the goal."

"ignores the surroundings for a while until the speech is finished."

As for student N.K said:

"Find a more comfortable place with no distractions so you can focus more on listening."

"Focus, pay more attention to the speaker and ignore any distractions on the left or right, then ask questions to the speaker."

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to determine the factors of problems faced by students in listening skills. After analyzing the results of the interviews, the author found that students face many causal factors in the listening process. This is in accordance with the theory taken by the author that there must be causal factors that affect them in the listening process. according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2003), difficulty means the fact that it is not easy to do or understand. Difficulty is also defined as any learning or emotional problem that affects, or substantially affects, a person's ability to learn. This statement is in accordance with the results of the author's research. At Madako University Tolitoli, Based on the confessions of several respondents, the difficulties they face in the listening process are very many, ranging from cultural differences such as accents, quality of materials, vocabulary that still sounds foreign, length and speed of audio, physical conditions of the classroom, noise-related problems, and lack of concentration affect their listening skills. The tendency to stop listening and concentrate on

word by word and then decide on its meaning interferes with understanding (Underwood, 1989). Underwood also added that failure to recognize words can also come from students' inability to separate words from connected speech.

Therefore, it is important to say that students need to know the vocabulary used in the audio materials to understand them better. Students who are familiar with the vocabulary used in the listening exercises will perform better and therefore achieve better results in the activity than students who have limited vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, Paralinguistic features such as accent, noise, rate of delivery (speed), pronunciation, and intonation cause students to experience difficulties when doing listening exercises.

Different accents cause difficulties for students in listening comprehension because they do not have much exposure to different accents. Students experience such problems because they are already accustomed to their own lecturer's accent and they are usually surprised and disappointed when they find it difficult to understand others. Hayati (2010) reported in her study that her subjects unanimously rated speed of delivery as one of the biggest obstacles to listening comprehension. Faster speech rates, whether computer-manipulated or naturally produced, tend to have a negative impact on listeners' comprehension. When the speaker speaks at a high speed, it is difficult for them to understand what is being said, even if the words spoken are words they are familiar with. In addition, unclear pronunciation by some speakers is also considered as a source of listening problems. Many students believe that unclear pronunciation makes it difficult for them to understand English listening lessons.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study were obtained from data collection carried out using three data collection techniques, namely first, data collection was carried out using observation guidelines where researchers made several observations related to the factors causing student problems in listening skills in the eighth semester English study program at Madako University Tolitoli. second, data collection was carried out using interview guidelines where researchers conducted questions and answers directly or online, and third, data collection was carried out using documentation guidelines used to complete observation and interview data to collect data that researchers did not obtain from the results of observations and interviews. Indicators related to citation of research results are based on the theory put forward by Raihan Maulida 2018. The completion of the thesis in this study consists of seven indicators, namely, 1. Cultural Differences 2. Quality of Recording Materials 3. Less Familiar Vocabulary 4. Length and Speed of Listening 5. Physical Condition 6. Problems Related to Noise and 7. Lack of Concentration.

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