

LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES & STRATEGIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Abstract Listening plays a vital role in daily lives. Everyday people listen for different purposes such as entertainment, academic purposes or obtaining necessary information. It is essential for learning languages since they enable to acquire insights and information, and to achieve success in communicating with others. But many students fail to seize them because of some learning difficulties in listening class. Teachers should be aware of students' learning difficulties. Understanding students' learning difficulties may enable EFL teachers to help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately improve their English listening abilities. This paper focuses on how teachers enhance their positive attitude; train them to be responsive by giving the suitable strategies that will enable them to develop their listening skills.

Keywords: *listening skills, difficulties, strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Listening plays an important role in communication as it is said that, of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9% (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). According to Devine (1982), listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in. Gilbert (1988), on the other hand, noted that students from kindergarten through high school were expected to listen 65-90 percent of the time. Wolvin and Coakley (1988) concluded that, both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication. Listening is central to the lives of students throughout all levels of educational development (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997). Listening is the most frequently used language skill in the classroom (Ferris, 1998; Murphy, 1991; Vogely, 1998). Both instructors (Ferris & Tagg, 1996) and students (Ferris, 1998) acknowledge the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings. Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skills were more important than reading skills as a factor contributing to academic success (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997). Nevertheless, it is evident that listening is more important for the lives of students since listening is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education.

EFL learners have serious problems in English listening comprehension due to the fact that universities pay more attention to English grammar, reading and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not important parts of many course books or curricula and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons (Jauhar Helmie, 2019). Most teachers take it for granted and believe that it will develop naturally within the process of language learning. Persulesy (1988:50) states that one of the reasons for the opinion that listening is a skill that tends to be neglected is the feeling among language teachers that this skill is automatically acquired by the learner as he learns to speak the language. Most teachers also assume listening is synonymous to breathing—automatic (Ina Thomas and Brian Dyer, 2007). In addition to this, Nobuko Osada, 2004 reported that listening has not drawn much attention of both teachers and

learners, they are generally less aware of its importance. In classrooms, teachers seem to test, not to teach listening. Meanwhile, students seem to learn listening, not listening comprehension.

As a result, it remains the most neglected and the least understood aspect of language teaching (Glisan, 1985). In fact, listening is a complex mental process that involves perception, attention, cognition, and memory. Comprehending speech in a foreign language is a quite difficult task for language learners (J. Helmie, 2015). When listening to a foreign language, many language learners face difficulties. In order to help students improve their listening ability, language teachers have to understand students' listening difficulties in comprehending spoken texts, and instruct effective listening strategies to help students solve their listening difficulties. In this paper, the researchers reviewed the strategies of listening comprehension and then identified the learners' listening comprehension problems when listening to oral texts. This paper intended to increase teachers' consciousness of these difficult areas in listening so that suitable and effective actions can be adopted.

METHOD

The study was conducted in Al Hasbi Junior School in Cilaku in Cianjur among 8th grade students in the ages of fourteen and in order to throw a light into problems of young learners with listening and offer solutions to the problems in listening. This study was applied in three different classes in order to compare the results and improve the reliability of the study. One of the groups (8-A) is composed of nineteen students, seven of which were girls and the rest of them were boys. The other group (8-B) has got nineteen students again including ten girls and nine boys. The group 4-C also has ten girls and eight boys. But, in the study, the effect of gender didn't show any variability or an important addition to results.

A questionnaire with four options was used in the study as it was more suitable for young learners to be objective and give precise answers to the questions. The students were asked to circle the problem or problems which they faced during the listening activity. The aim of why post listening activity was composed of two phases was to allow the review of the answers and increase the reliability of the activity. This activity is also counted as a kind of retrospection allowing learners to reach reflections about themselves just after the task, which increases reliability.

After post listening activity, a questionnaire was applied to the students giving four options they could choose in order to understand the problems they faced during listening their song. They could have chosen more than one problem if they had faced more than one. The problems given in the questionnaire were:

- a) I cannot understand clearly as the speaker in the song are speaking so fast
- b) I know the words, but I cannot remember immediately when I hear.
- c) I know the words, but I feel so anxious and under pressure to fill in the activity.
- d) The speakers utter the words in a different way than we have learned.

If the problems are categorized in general headings, then we can say:

The first problem might be considered to belong to problems based on speakers at first, but as an easy and suitable listening activity is chosen matching with the levels of students, it's better to categorize it within the problems based on learner. (As it depends on learners to have more practice in target language) The second problem is a problem again based on learners' own strategies, the third one is categorized in psychological problems based on learners.

The fourth one is categorized within phonological problems in listening. (The phonetics that teacher is expected to teach).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Some of these findings are as follows:

1. Quality of Recorded Materials
2. Cultural Differences
3. Accent
4. Unfamiliar Vocabulary
5. Length and Speed of Listening

Discussion about learners' difficulties & strategies in listening comprehension are as follows:

1. Listeners cannot control the speed of speech.
2. Listeners cannot have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them. Teachers decide what and when to repeat listening texts and it is very difficult for teachers to know whether or not their learners understood what they have heard.
3. Listeners do not have high vocabulary knowledge. Speakers may select words that listeners do not know them.
4. Listeners may lack contextual knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Listening matters not only deep language learning but also in everyday life communication. However, students seems to have trouble listening. Lots of problems, like their timing spend too little on self-study to raise a skill, which is not appropriate strategy learner, and also the listening material itself. Students must have more exposure variations of listening, and studying tips or strategy through their every lesson

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