

## Students' Listening Comprehension Difficulties on the Sixth Semester of the English Education Study Program at Subang University

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out what difficulties students face in their English listening comprehension. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, while the research instruments used questionnaires and interviews. This study used seven students from the English Education study program at Subang University, West Java as participants. The questionnaire was conducted on six categories of listening difficulties. The writer found ten problems faced by students in listening comprehension, some of which were caused by the listening material and the physical environment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In English as a foreign language, listening plays an important role in the language learning process. According to Ramadhianti and Somba (2021), listening is considered to have an important role because listening provides input in the language learning process, and by understanding the input correctly, a person will increase his knowledge, and communication will work effectively. Moreover, the first skill to be tested in an English as a foreign language exam is listening. This shows us how crucial it is for students to develop this skill.

There are numerous definitions of the term listening Comprehension. (Rost, 2002 and Hamouda, 2013 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) Defined Listening comprehension is an interactive process in which listeners engage in constructing meaning. Speech discrimination, past knowledge, grammatical structures, stress, and intonation, as well as other linguistic or non-linguistic clues, all help listeners understand spoken input. (Helgesen and Brown, 2007 as cited in Darti and Andi, 2017) Listening comprehension is when listeners actively pay attention and try to understand and interpret what they hear.

Students may have trouble with listening comprehension. There are so many reasons that cause them difficulty in learning such as various accents that confuse students, then differences in idioms, or even vocabulary they don't know. Of course, it all affects the language learning process. According to Yagang (2019) classifies four difficulty factors for listening comprehension include the content, the speaker, the listener, and the setting. The first factor is the content. Many students find it more difficult to listen to a recorded message than to read the

same message on a piece of paper, since listening. In many cases, the listener cannot predict what the speaker will say, whether it is a news report on the radio or an everyday conversation. In addition, because the news on the radio cannot be heard at a slower speed. The second factor is the speaker, Learners tend to get used to their teacher's accent or variations of standard British or American English. They find it difficult to understand speakers with other accents.

The third factor is listeners; foreign language students are not familiar enough with clichés and collocations in English to predict missing words or phrases. Where foreign language learners typically focus more time on reading than listening and therefore are less exposed to different types of listening material. The final factor is the physical setup. The unclear sound produced from poor-quality equipment can interfere with listener understanding. Listening to the material on tape or radio lacks visual and aural cues. Not seeing the speaker's body language and facial expressions makes it more difficult for listeners to understand the speaker's intent.

Regarding listening difficulties, many researchers have conducted related studies; including Nadhira & Warni (2021), the research analyzed six students' low, medium, and high English proficiency levels to their listening difficulties. In this study, it was found that the difficulties found varied among six students at low, medium, and high ability levels. Students with low abilities found that there were difficulties with unfamiliar words, difficulties with the speed of speaking on the speaker's aspect, and felt a lack of vocabulary. Intermediate-level students found that the difficulties associated with speaking were speed of speech and noise in physical settings aspects. Whereas at the level of high-ability students, long-spoken texts and difficulty with accent variations in the speaker aspect and noise in the physical setting aspect.

More relevant research by Hamouda (2013), this research was conducted with the participation of 60 first-year students majoring in English and translation at Qassim University. Through this research, it was found that students at Qassim University faced various kinds of listening problems in learning comprehension such as unfamiliar words, length of spoken text, speed rate, various accents, lack of concentration, and pronunciation.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to describe the problem more clearly and have a better understanding of the problems faced by students in listening comprehension. The writer used an interview and a questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire was adapted from Lotfi (2012) which consisted of six categories of Listening difficulty, and then the writers simplified it into eight close-ended questions. Then the interview consisted of four open-ended questions.

This study involved seven students from the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program at Subang University. The questionnaire was carried out via a Google Form, which was distributed by the author, while the interview was carried out online via WhatsApp call.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the Findings of research conducted based on data collection methods; Findings obtained from questionnaires and interview findings.

### 3.1. Questionnaire Findings

Table 1. Students Listening Comprehension Difficulties

No.	Items	Percentages	
		Yes	No
1	Do you find it difficult to understand Listening to text when the topic is unfamiliar?	80%	20%

2	Do you find it difficult to understand long conversation?	100%	-
3	It is difficult to infer the meaning of unknown word while listening?	100%	-
4	Do you find it difficult when listening without transcript?	80%	20%
5	Do you find it difficult to understand when the speaker speaks too fast?	100%	-
6	Do you find it difficult to understand well when the speaker is in a variety of accents?	100%	-
7	Do you lose concentration if the recording a poor quality?	100%	-
8	Do you find it difficult to concentrate if noises around?	100%	-

The first question was asked to find out if they had difficulty understanding topics that were unfamiliar to them, and the data shows 80% that the students answered yes. Based on the Nuttall Declaration (1996) says that a more attractive requirement for understanding a text is that learners must share certain assumptions about the subject with the fact that students construct their understanding of the subject they listen to base on their experience. It is very understandable if students have difficulties, because if they understand the topics in the listening material they can relate it to personal experience and that makes it easier for them in the learning process.

Apart from unfamiliar topics, long conversations, and unfamiliar words can also make it difficult for students. Through this table on questions two and three, 100% of students have difficulty understanding long conversations and unfamiliar words. This can happen because they feel bored. After all, the conversation is too long. Besides that, the lack of vocabulary that students have causes them to focus too much on understanding one word while they have to understand the whole topic.

On the fourth question, the results show that 80% of students have difficulty understanding listening without a transcript. This shows that their habits depend on the help of transcripts to understand the material, so they have a little difficulty when facing the real listening test.

In addition to students' basic abilities, speakers can also be a factor in students' understanding of difficulties in listening. As shown in questions number five and six, speakers who speak too fast and with various accents are also a problem faced by students. Students who are used to one type of accent and have difficulty understanding other accents can cause this factor. Of course, this has an effect, especially because the difference in accent makes it longer for them to understand what the speaker is saying because of the slightly different way of pronouncing words.

Other factors that can cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension are environmental situation factors and learning support tools. As shown in questions seven and eight, poor audio quality is a difficulty that students often face, even though it doesn't look very important, it disturbs students in the process of listening comprehension. Likewise, the noise that occurs around it also really disturbs the concentration of students.

### 3.2. Interview Findings

This interview consists of three questions conducted via WhatsApp call. The first question is "Do you think listening is important in the process of learning English?" a student replied, "In my opinion, it is important because by listening we can understand what is conveyed by others so that communication occurs in the learning process". While other students answered, "I think it's important because by listening we can find out how a vocabulary is pronounced correctly."

The second question "Did your teacher teach listening when you were at school?" then one of the students replied, "Never, I just learned listening when I was in college." Likewise, other students answered, "When I was at school I never studied it, usually the teacher only focused on grammar and reading."

Then the last question "What is your biggest difficulty in learning to listen?" then the last question "What is your biggest difficulty in learning to listen?" the first student replied, "My biggest difficulty is the lack of vocabulary, so when listening in English I need to process it first because the vocabulary is not understood. And also the poor audio quality is a difficulty for Me." then another student replied, "The biggest difficulty for me is the unknown vocabulary and also the difference in the speaker's accent."

The findings from the interviews show that listening is important for them in the process of learning English. However, it can also be found that at school the teachers do not teach listening to their students, they often focus on grammar and reading even though listening is very important so that language input occurs to students. Besides that, it was also found that unknown vocabulary was a difficulty that students often encountered in the listening comprehension process, and then different accents and poor audio quality were found to be students' difficulties in listening comprehension

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Students in the sixth semester of English education face many difficulties in listening comprehension. They are: Unknown words, length of spoken language, unfamiliar topics, on answering Inability to concentrate and listen at the same time, insufficient transcripts, loss of attention due to poor recording quality, multiple accents, speakers talking too fast, there is ambient noise, the sound quality of the audio is poor. This means that students not only face problems with listening in front of an audience, but also with listening material and the physical environment. Students have to study hard and practice more to improve their listening comprehension.

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