PROBLEMS IN LISTENING FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENT IN JAMBI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to describe problems faced by the fifth semester students of English study program in Listening for Academic Purposes. There are two themes in Students Problems in Listening for Academic Purposes which are external problems and internal problems. In external there are seven problems: Listening Materials, Quality of Media recorder, Accent, Teaching method, Situation of the class, Unfamiliar Vocabulary, and Length and Speed of the Listening. In internal problems: Physical Conditions and Lack of Concentration. This is a case study. The study used an interview with eleven questions. The sample of this study was twelve fifth semester students of English study program. The finding of this study showed that the most dominant problems that faced by fifth students of English program are situation of the class and native speaker accent. The result of this study could be used as one of references for lecturers to help students overcome these problems.

Key words: Qualitative, Listening for Academic Purposes Problems, English Study program Students, Case Study Research.

Introduction

Wallace (2004) states that listening proficiency is a skill that is very important because this skill that makes human beings gain insight, understanding, knowledge, and information, as well as achieving success in communicating with others. In fact, based on the researcher observation, experience, and knowledge as long as at this time the researcher learning English language, not a few of the English department students particularly in Jambi still cannot comprehend or understand the words of the sentences spoken in English language verbally by their interlocutor. In the research conducted by Shi (2004) investigated that 43.2% of the students thought that the most difficult lessons is listening comprehension and some of the students even have difficulty in hearing or listening to the teacher who gave lessons in the English language. From the result it states that students are still difficulties in listening comprehension and it became one of the considerations obstacles in learning English. This means that they are still lacking of English Language, in this case obviously is Listening skill. And their controls in the listening skill are still very limited.

Listening is probably more difficult than reading because students often understand written word more than the spoken word. Furthermore when reading, students can go back to
read and re-read the phrase, whereas when listening they only get one chance. With reading, the reader who sets the pace whereas with listening it’s the speaker or recording that sets the pace. "Listening is an active process of involving listeners themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Scarcella & Oxford, (1992) further define the process of listening by suggesting four areas of comprehension which operate simultaneously in a non-hierarchal way depending on the nature of communication, namely: understanding of isolated words, phrases, sentences and discourses. In addition, Brown, (1990) also suggests people listen for the meaning of the message and not to how it is pronounced, as listener are not automatic processor of acoustic signal but active participants who utilized their background knowledge to make sense of the words uttered by the speaker (cited in Chan, 2001). Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker’s accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning to become a good listener it is capable of doing these four things simultaneously.

When it comes to the listening problems there are many things that can become factors that could cause difficulties and problems for the student when studying listening. It can be seen with several previous studies by some researchers that have conducted the study that argued about the listening problems. Usually, in every language learning class, a teacher tends to teach the three language skills which are Reading, Speaking, and Writing more often. So, it also could possibly cause the students problem in listening skill. Yagang, (1994) state that some of teachers think that listening is the easiest skill to teach, whereas most students think it is the most difficult to improve. This contradiction tells us that there are some things about teaching listening that need to be explored.

Bingol, (2014) stated that there are some problems that becoming the barriers by students as they learn English Listening course, which are:

**Quality of recorded material**
Even we are living 21st century which is that age of technology still there are some classrooms do not have computer, smart board, multimedia systems and so on. The quality of sound system also affects understanding of listening.

**Cultural differences**
Being unfamiliar of cultural knowledge of language plays a great role understanding the context. The topic may contain completely different cultural matter than the students have. In this case students may have difficulties to imagine what has been told. The instructors should give prior knowledge about the topic beforehand.

**Accent**
Munro and Derwing, (1998) claimed that too many genres of accented speech would result in a significant reduction in comprehension. (Fan, 1993) pointed out that usually ESL/EFL listeners are used to “their teacher’s accent or to the standard variety of British or American English”. In this case teachers has to familiarize the students both British and American accent.
**Unfamiliar vocabulary**

(Hung, 1998) informed that listening passages with known words are easier for learners to understand, even if the theme is unknown to them. His research represented that knowing the meaning of the words might arouse students learning interest and lead to a positive effect in listening ability. Another problem is here that many words have more than one meaning and if they are used their less common usage students get confused.

**Length and speed of the listening**

Another reason makes listening text difficult is the speed. If the speakers speak faster than normal listener may have difficulties to catch target words. On the contrary of reading comprehension the listener cannot control speed of the speaker and this cause the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension (Underwood, 1989). It is clear for most language learners and teachers that a slower speech speed would facilitate beginner learners’ listening comprehension (Flaherty, 1979; Griffiths, 1990, 1992; King & Behnke, 1989; Zhao, 1997).

(Blau, 1990) concluded that lessen the input speed is one of the effective technics that helps comprehension for second language learners.

**Physical conditions**

Sometimes inconvenience of classrooms affects students listening comprehension. In the large classrooms students who are sitting on the back rows may not hear the recording as students sit in front. Students who prefer to stay next to the windows also effected by the noise that come from outside. The size of the classroom also makes difficult for teacher to manage the all class in group activity or to get feedback from students. The temperature of class can be counted as a factor that makes listening comprehension difficult. The class that does not have room conditioner could also cause students problem.

**Lack of concentration**

Students’ motivation is one of the crucial factors that affect listening comprehension. It can be difficult for students maintaining the concentration in a foreign language learning classroom. In listening comprehension, even the smallest pause in attention may considerably spoil comprehension. When students find the topic of the listening text interesting, comprehending would be easier. For all that, students find listening very boring even if they are interested in the topic because it needs a huge amount of effort in order to not miss the meaning.

Flowerdew and Miller (1996) investigated EFL learners’ problems in listening to academic lectures. The problems reported by students included the fast speed of delivery, new terminology and concepts, difficulties in concentrating, and problems related to the physical environment. While Hermawan, (2012) argues that the factors that can influence listening problems can be divided into two, which are internal factors and external factors:

**Internal factors**

Internal factors which may affect the listening process is; problems with hearing and physical condition. When a person suffers from hearing problems or damage to the hearing instrument that can inhibit the entry of a wave in a certain volume, then the listening process
will be disturbed. As well as when the physical conditions are less healthy then the students/listeners cannot concentrate on listening to the task/conversation very well. Another factor is listeners limited to listen simultaneously on all what is heard. Many listeners could only listen to the half of the verbal message that put forward by other people every day.

Thus the listener does not always listen well if their attention were deviated. A further factor is to think too fast, it is difficult to perform activities of listening carefully. While there is time to take listener mind while others are talk, listeners usually even think about things that are not related to the idea of the speaker, such as personal interests, daydreaming, planning disclaimers and so on. Listening process is also influenced by motivation and feeling listener when it (personal interests). Listeners will listen more effectively, and consciously select what is being heard, especially when they needed or wanted the information.

a. External factor

External factors include environmental factors, material factors, speaker, speaking styles and techniques. The material can influence the listening process. Listeners will be more interested in the new material compared to the material that has been known or experienced. Speaker factor can distract the listener attention. For example, an experienced and calm speaker will be more persuasive than the nervous speaker. Besides, the speaker style, speaker appearance, and technical presentation of the material can be one of the factors that affect the listening process as visualization and technology used.

In Graham(2006) (as cited by Chen, 2013) study, the main listening problems reported by foreign language learners were related to the speedy delivery of text leading to failure in identifying and recognizing words in a stream of input. From these studies, although having identified a range of listening problems related to factors of text, task, speaker and listener, it can be noted that the most commonly identified problems are fast speech rate and unfamiliar words perceived by learners. Generalizing from the results of these studies, there seems to be a tendency for most learners to falsely assume or blame their listening difficulties on external factors of text or task, rather than internal factors such as learners’ anxiety, background knowledge, language proficiency or their ways of processing listening. Even though the reported problems were related to listener factors or process factors, they were mostly confined to the lower level processing problems such as difficulties in identifying words they know and chunking streams of speech and concentration.

Method

The design of this study is a Qualitative research with a case study approach, this design of study already used in this research in order to investigate what is the English Students problem in Listening skill, and the data were described descriptively. Holloway (2002) defines qualitative research as “a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live”. Researchers use the qualitative approach to explore the behavior, perspectives, experiences and feelings of people and emphasize the understanding of these elements.
Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the world as seen through the eyes of the people being studied. Qualitative methods are closely linked to case studies. A case study is considered by some researchers to be a part of qualitative research—a type and, sometimes, a method or scientific approach (A.B. Starman, 2013). A case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). For more detailed definitions of a case study, Sagadin (1991) states that a “case study is used when we analyze and describe, for example each person individually (his or her activity, special needs, life situation, life history, etc.), a group of people (a school department, a group of students with special needs, teaching staff, etc.), individual institutions or a problem (or several problems), process, phenomenon or event in a particular institution, etc. in detail.

Research Sites and Access

This research was doing at English Department of Jambi University, the reason why the researcher chose this University as a site for the researcher to conduct this research because the researcher already understand very well with the situation and the conditions as well as the circumstances of this campus. The researcher already asked the English Language Program chairperson and team to get the permission in doing this research. Furthermore, most of the participant in this research is the researcher's friends too, so, it will be easy to make the researcher to conducting the research and easily get the access. The researcher also find many English students in this university are difficult and find a lot of problems in the listening skill, whether it is inside the classroom or in the outside of classroom.

The sampling procedures technique used in this research is typical sampling. In describing a program or its participants to people not familiar with the program it can be helpful to provide a qualitative profile of one or more "typical" cases. These cases are selected with the cooperation of key informants, such as program staff or knowledgeable participants, who can help identify what is typical Patton, (1990)

In this research, the researcher used The English Students Program at the 5th semester in academic year 2017 in Jambi University to be the participants. The researcher interviewed 12 English students who already finished their listening subject. There is 5 male students and 7 female students, they are from different class (A, B, H, I). The reason choose twelve students are based on Polkinghome (1998 as cited in fadloan, 2013) stating that the purposive sampling should provide rich and varied insights into phenomenon and the quantity for the samples were from 5 to 25 people. Researcher chooses the respondents from four classes to be interview; they were 3 students from class A, 3 students from class B, 3 students from class H and 3 students from class I because it was a typical sampling, the researcher divided 12 them into three categories; students who got high score, students who got moderate score and students who got low score. High score was characterized by score A until B+, moderate score was characterized by score B until C+ and low score was characterized by score C until D.
**Data collection**

To collect the data by the participants in this research, the researcher will use the face to face interview with the participants.

**Interview**

In this research, the researcher already did in-depth interview with the participants; the researcher will do the interview with the participants in asking about what the listening problems that they are faced. The answer of the participants is the data of the research.

**Trustworthiness**

According to Simon, M.K, (2011) there are some ways to develop the credibility in qualitative data which are: triangulation of information among different sources of data, receiving feedback from informants (member checking), and expert review. Member checking is the process of verifying information with the targeted group. It allows the stakeholder or participant the chance to correct errors of fact or errors of interpretation. Member checks add to the validity of the observer’s interpretation of qualitative observations.

In the beginning, the researcher already explains this study is related and linked with the researcher experienced in listening for professional context. So in this research, trustworthiness is used in order to get and develop the feedback from the participants, accuracy, credibility as well as the finding of the data. The researcher already did the interviews with the participants, every participant already asked some questions, after that the interview session the researcher already did elaborate more to get the credibility and findings of the data.

**Researcher’s Bias**

When analyzing the data the researcher may naturally look for data that confirms their hypotheses or confirms personal experience, overlooking data inconsistent with personal beliefs. Joanna Smith & Helen Noble, (2014) in doing this research, the researcher already implement the researcher’s experienced in listening proficiency. The researcher are applied his English Language skill particularly in listening skill.

**Data Analysis**

In this study, after the researcher collects the data, the researcher analyzes and describes the data descriptively. Wiersma, (1991) stated “Data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorization, description, and synthesis. Data reduction is necessary for the description and interpretation of the phenomenon under study”. In short, data analysis is systematically processed to analyze data which have been collected.

The researcher did in-depth interview with every participant by asking about what are the problems in Listening for academic purposes that they faced during their study. After interview, the researcher read and continued to listens the results of the interviews with the participants so the researcher understand very well with the content of the interview.

After the researcher understand very well and get the major outline of the interviews that have been done, then the researcher started to get the results of the interview data gathered with coding and compile these results by using themes and sub themes.
The last step is conclusion. Based on the process that explain above, the researcher transcribed the data that already gathered by the participant, and implementing the data based on the researcher experienced, and then write a report from the interview. And finally, the researcher can make a conclusion.

In short, the steps in analyzing the data are: (1) the researcher collects the data through in-depth interview with the participants. Then, the researcher selects, identify, and focuses on the data by referring to formulation of the research problem. (2) After selecting the data, the researcher displays those data into good sentences and do a coding and divide it into theme and sub-themes. (3) Finally, after displaying all the data result, the researcher can draw the conclusion.

**Result and Discussions**

From the results of the findings in this research and discussion that have been obtained by researcher, it can be concluded that there are various problems that faced by the students in learning Listening for Academic Purposes. Most of the English Department in Jambi University have to faced serious problems when it comes to Listening Materials, Accent, Unfamiliar Vocabulary, Length and Speed of the Listening, Situation of the Class and Lack of Concentration.

Atmosphere in the class have a big impact for English Department students in Jambi University. A good quality and good atmosphere in the class are an obligation in order to make an effective material and help students to achieve a successfulness in their Listening fo Academi Purposes learning. Besides that, students will be effective in learning if the materials are effective from them. Qualities of the materials are one of the most essential elements in the process of teaching and learning.

**References**


