



The Interferences Faced by The EFL Students in Listening Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

Listening is one of the important skills which must be possessed by the students. But, unfortunately, some students can not cover it in their learning. They found some difficulties during listening. This research aimed to find out the interferences that are faced by the EFL students. This research was qualitative descriptive research. The data is collected from the questionnaires to get the information on students' difficulties. The data showed that some factors interrupt the learners in listening and they came from internal and external factors. The existing difficulties mostly come from the material given, the second factor comes from the listener and the last factor is related to the physical setting. It is correct that the interferences in listening comprehension faced by students, not only from the listeners themselves but also from content material and surroundings during the listening process. Hence, the students have to find the appropriate way and practice more to improve their listening ability.

Keywords: *Listening Comprehension, Difficulties, EFL Students*

INTRODUCTION

Language is means and a tool used by people around the world to communicate with others by using sounds, symbols, and words to express ideas, meanings, or thoughts. Language is simply essential to human existence (Noer et al., 2021). Living in the global era right now makes people communicate intensely all over the world, not only in an active English-speaking country but also in the other countries in the world, like or not the ability to communicate in English is needed and important to be mastery.

English is known as a language that is used in many international events, and it is used for getting information about education, science, technology, culture, etc. In Indonesia, English is one of the obligatory subjects taught in educational institutions from secondary school to university. The global community's demand for English proficiency has been rapidly expanding (Astri et al., 2022). English is a global language that has long been utilized as a foreign language in Indonesia (Wahab & Astri, 2022). Discussing about English, it has four skills that should be mastered by the learner including for

Indonesian learner. Listening is a receptive skill that involves responding rather than producing language. Moreover, it is one of the necessary skills in learning the language. Hence, by exposing to the spoken target language effectively improve the learners' listening skill. The first stage in learning English is mastering the listening skill. It is because before someone speaks, reads, or writes, they must listen first. Listening becomes a bridge when learning to speak, read, and write. But in fact, most of the students still feel difficult to understand what the speaker said. (Bingol et al., 2014) (Handayani et al., 2002) said that one of the students' difficulties in listening is unfamiliar vocabulary.

(Handayani et al., 2002) showed in her research that Listening comprehension is one of the skills in a language that has the most difficult tasks for the learners of a foreign language due to several reasons. To begin with, most students are rarely exposed to audio material created by native speakers. Second, several topics in sociocultural, discourse, pragmatic, and strategic competency are unfamiliar to the pupils. Third, EFL students' lack of information about learning strategies to address their listening impairments makes listening to a challenging task for them. As a result, teachers must encourage and motivate students to use learning strategies in listening activities. To absorb information through audio recordings, students must be exposed to intelligible input within a continuum of spoken texts. It is also said by (Sofyan et al., 2019) that some fun strategies

are needed for the students with poor learning ways because it enables the students to improve their listening skills.

Listening is a conscious act of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual cues. The beginning of the sentence should be remembered while moving on to the end. They recall word patterns and meanings from memory and use that knowledge to figure out the relationship between the sentence and its context. They remember the meaning of the sentence until seconds or years afterward when they can recollect it. Memory is used in this case as a tool to include all aspects of sentence processing. Considering the facts and realities that surround the study, the research challenges are the interferences that students experience when learning to listen.

The findings of this study should help to improve teaching and learning quality by identifying students' difficulties with listening comprehension. This research could shed light on the fact that some students struggle with the listening process. Knowing this allows the lecturer to reflect on their teaching by developing and implementing various approaches and tactics during the teaching and learning process to ensure that the students are comfortable with any activity involving listening skills.

Listening comprehension is a significant element skill that allows humans to communicate and comprehend each other by using their hearing senses (Krashen et al., 2018)

(Sofyan et al., 2019). Listening is regarded not only as hearing but also as more dimensions of understanding, paying overt attention, analyzing, evaluating the messages spoken, and possibly acting based on what has been heard. And it is possible to give more activities for the students to do during class. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines skill as the capability of doing something. So, the student's listening skill can be explained as an ability to comprehend language spoken input well. Knowledge of English is not only the one skill to understand and comprehend listening material and create the task but also the ways that the learners can process the spoken text that they heard.

Talking about strategies in listening, there are two types of listening such as bottom-up and top-down listening. The bottom-up listening is pretended that listening is a way of decoding the sounds from the simple meaningful words to a complete text. In the teaching and learning listening process, students must be able to hear what the instructor or speaker had talked about in order to understand the instruction. Even if some students' hearing is impaired, they must comprehend the information. As a result, the students must be given clear instructions in order for them to understand the important information. The majority of students have to deal with listening interferences. Interference is a disruption in the learning process, particularly when it comes to learning to listen. These interferences may cause the receiver to lose

focus and pay less attention to the message. Interferences can sometimes cause the listener to lose concentration, resulting in an incomplete or incorrect message from the sender. As a result, recipients would misinterpret the messages and not understand them as the speaker meant. Furthermore, listening interference could be the result of a lack of vocabulary, rapid delivery, imprecise pronunciation, interpretation issues, poor recall, and so on.

The significant problems are commonly gathered by EFL students in listening courses dealing with tasks and students' habits in listening practice. Students studied English for six years in elementary school, three years in junior school, and also three years in high school before entering a university. The major focus which the students practice more is on language structures, reading, vocabulary and writing while Listening skill seems rarely learned in the English program (Novika et al., 2020). Hence, when the students face audio listening at universities, they get a big problem passing it. (Sofyan et al., 2019) found the problem in learning listening comprehension such as lack of vocabulary, difficulty concentrating, the problem with an accent, confusion in similar phonemes, the speed of the speech, problems in reduction, and there are no repetitions and learning media, the noise from students themselves, unclear sound, air conditioner problems and seat position.

METHOD

This study used qualitative research with the purpose was to describe the students' interferences in listening. Furthermore, this research is used to set an investigation and rich description of the obstacles to listening comprehension. This research used descriptive qualitative research methods. The goal of descriptive research, according to Nassaji (2015, p. 129), is to describe phenomena and their characteristics. A descriptive technique entails gathering information to respond to the research questions. Because the primary objective of a descriptive study is to determine what are the interferences in listening comprehension that students face based on the results of the questionnaire given, it does not represent a threat to the subject or distorts the data collected from the sample. The questionnaire has 15 questions. They were designed to determine the causes of the students' learning problems, both external and internal. The external factor includes learning difficulties related to learning materials, lecturers, and media, and also the Internal factor is related to students themselves.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

A questionnaire was distributed to 24 English students to know their interferences in the listening process. The data was collected from questionnaires related to the listening problems and the context of the listening text. Some interferences found in listening materials

were unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structure, limited vocabulary, unclear pronounced, unfamiliar accent, and unfamiliar topic.

1. Interference-related to unfamiliar words

The results of the questionnaire showed that the students' problem in listening was focused on unfamiliar words. It was asked to know unfamiliar words including idioms and also advanced words disrupted the learners listening. There were 22 of 24 students have responded that unfamiliar words in their listening comprehension. This fact showed that vocabulary includes a major interference to most students in the listening process in the class. They lack drills in listening because they only learned listening when they were in the class.

2. Interference-related to poor grammatical structure

The results of the questionnaire showed that grammatical structures include interference in learners' listening process. There were 21 of 24 students have responded that difficult grammatical structures interrupt their listening comprehension. The students point out that the difficult grammatical structures caused difficulty to comprehend the text.

3. Interference-related to limited vocabulary

The results of the questionnaire show that limited vocabulary was one of the obstacles to students' understanding of listening. There were 18 of 24 students have responded to it.

The students felt difficulties to adhere the speaker because they lack vocabulary.

4. Interference-related to unclear pronunciation

The results of the questionnaire showed that unclear pronunciation was one of the student's difficulties in learning listening comprehension. There were 20 of 24 students who responded to it. The students pointed out that when the spoken sounds were too fast, it was hard to understand what is being said by the speaker, even though the words are familiar to them. The students just hear the words as a single currency unit when the native speaker speaks fastly. It caused the students unfamiliar with the speed of delivery spoken that was conveyed by the native speaker. Thus, the students need to practice their listening as often as possible. Listening to spoken text with unclear pronunciation or the speaker speaking too fast makes the listener feel exhausted because they tried to understand the words that they hear.

5. Interference-related to unfamiliar accent

The results of the questionnaire showed that an unfamiliar accent is one of the students' difficulties in listening comprehension. There were 14 of 24 students have responded to it. It indicated that some students hardly understand the spoken because they are different varieties of accents that are used by the speaker. The students were confused about British and American accents because

they have different pronunciations and intonations.

6. Interference pertinent to unfamiliar topics

The results of the questionnaire showed that an unfamiliar topic is one of the students' interferences in comprehensive listening. There were 14 of 24 students have responded to it. The students' responses indicated that many students find it difficult to comprehend listening when the topic is unfamiliar. Thus, the students need to improve their experience to build up their understanding.

Secondly, listening Interference is Related to the Listener. Students' interferences in the listening process were caused not only by the material as the listening recording but also by the lack of the English proficiency of students. Moreover, understanding the spoken also needs high concentration, the students cannot gain the full concentration to hear the script that was given when they felt nervous. Some factors that involved interferences for the students in the listening process such as lost focus, unable to recognize the word signals, encountering passive words, and lack of basic background knowledge.

1. Interference-related to their attention or lost focus

The result data showed that from 24 respondents, 14 students agreed with it. They lost attention when they were faced with strange stress or intonation that was said by the native speaker. It made the

student lose focus to find the content of the listening. They felt unable to focus and then interrupt and miss their listening. They admit when they gain what the speaker said, they try to find the answer but they spent much time answering it.

2. Interference-related to the difficulty to recognize signal words

A Signal word is a word or phrase that gives an idea about what word might come next, by using their signal words ability can encourage the students to think creatively about the meaning of words. It also can help the students to get the yarn of material content. The result of the data showed that some students find it difficult to identify the signal word and 15 students agreed that. The students had low knowledge about the function of signal words.

3. Interference-related to encountering an unknown word

When gathering an unknown word, some students fail to comprehend listening and identify the meaning of the new word, 22 students agreed with it. This problem interfered with the listening understanding that caused the students to miss some important information from the audio. They said that there were many unfamiliar words that they find as long a listening process. When they found unfamiliar words, they just focus to look finding the meaning of the word and then choose the correct answer.

4. Interference-related to a lack of basic background knowledge.

Background knowledge is one of the interferences that can affect students' listening understanding. The data showed that from 24 respondents 11 students agreed with it. Insufficiency of background knowledge can bring down the students listening understanding, even though their skill in listening is good. It showed that background knowledge is a significant thing to predict the core of speaking.

5. Interference-related to Physical Setting

The third factor is not only the interferences that come from the material and listener but also comes the surrounding of students. It is called a physical setting. Clatter and poor quality of audio recording can annoy students in listening comprehension. The result of the questionnaire showed that 24 students agreed to it. Most students felt that the low quality of recording interfered with their listening comprehension because make them lose concentration.

Discussion

This research presented to know the Interferences encountered by the students in an English foreign language. The questionnaires were employed as the instrument to get the data.

From the data, it can be shown that listening is a study that has a difficult task to be done. The interferences of listening that are encountered by the students were quite

assorted. In principle inability of students to understand the speaker is the main cause and it was caused by certain factors. Some problem encountered by the students when they study was the material given.

The students' interference in listening was pertinent to unfamiliar words. A major obstacle to most students in listening was mastery of vocabulary. Thus, analyzing the meaning of spoken is essential in listening. But in fact, the data showed that the students felt difficult to analyze the meaning of spoken that they hear because their mastery of vocabulary was very low and they found some unfamiliar topics. In line with the study conducted by (Aryana & Apsari, 2018), the students used the Indonesian language as their mother tongue to socialize. In fact, The students' listening did not common with English words. Some of the students necessary a lot of time to interpret the meaning of the words that they hear. Lack of vocabulary becomes a substantial problem because the students can not improve their skills in English. (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) stated that the listener can come up with the interest and motivation that give a positive effect on the listening ability by understanding the meaning of words.

The next interference is related to poor grammatical structure. The students agreed that grammatical structure is one of the interferences in listening comprehension. Knowing about the component structure of the text is the most significant in comprehensive

listening. Thus, the students' ability to listen to complex sentences is extremely disreputable because they lack grammar. (Diora & Rosa, 2020) found that some of the students did not master grammar structure because they thought it was totally hard to do. As well in listening, students found it difficult because the listening text has complexed grammatical structures and the students were hard to understand about it.

The next difficulty was unclear pronunciation was one of the student's difficulties in learning listening comprehension. Listening to spoken text with unclear pronunciation or the speaker speaking too fast makes the students should try hard to understand. They need more time to know what they hear. Therefore, it is also considered the cause of the listening problem. In line with the study conducted by (Lestari et al., 2019) Pronunciation is one of the significant difficulties faced by the students in listening comprehension.

An unfamiliar accent was one of the students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The spoken accent could give an effect on the listening process. Unwittingly, it occurred in most students where the accent could be an obstacle factor for the student in learning and listening. Several students felt that accent had a big contribution to the listening problem. The students cannot understand what the speaker was talking about. Based on (Erzad, 2020) said that unfamiliar accents have a big contribution

to affect the listeners. They fail to get information and hear the words.

The unfamiliar topic becomes one of the problems in this case. The student builds up their understanding based on their experience. There were short conversations about kind topics such as economy, politics, environment, biology, and others. It makes it the students difficult to master the words related to the field. It was affected because they read less about it. They have to build up their lexical knowledge by reading and listening.

The other problems came from the listener factor. The first problem is pertinent to their attention or lost focus. The low concentration caused the student to miss the words and make them fail to understand what they just listened to. Indeed, this interference will bother their listening because they are lost concentration and miss the contents of listening. (Erzad, 2020) her study stated that students are boring even if the topic is interesting because they need a huge amount of effort to not miss the meaning.

The students also took much time to know and focus on the audio content. The lack of focus could hamper the students to adhere the lesson well. Consequently, high concentration during listening was considered the significant thing to keep the students to be focused. Knowing signal words is able to help the students to get thought from the material. Thus, it can help the listener predict what may come next by using the signal word. But some students fail to identify the

signal words during listening. To encourage the students to imagine what they are going to hear, the lecturer may talk about the topic of the listening text or something about the speakers. Besides, students can be invited to establish a list of words or phrases that relate to the topic and may appear in the listening text. This way allows students to know more vocabulary better and when students have a certain vocabulary in mind, they will be more confident and be ready to listen effectively.

The next interference was pertinent to encountering unknown words. (Sofyan et al., 2019) said that the lack of students' vocabulary makes it too limited to understand the message spoken and affects interpretation. It could be said that the students cannot do the task if they have many unknown vocabularies. They will miss some information during listening because they found so many unfamiliar words in listening comprehension. The students did not know how to infer meaning because they have no more knowledge about listening and they have deficient English vocabulary. It also stated in the study conducted by (Wulandari & Ayuanita, 2019) familiar with the vocabulary and the meaning can help the students to know more about the material.

Therefore, Background knowledge is one of the significant things that affect students' listening comprehension. (Yahmun dkk, 2020) in their study said that "we can say that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Therefore, it can be concluded

that a lack of background knowledge can cause their ability to comprehend the listening, even if they master a listening skill.

The third factor comes not only from the difficulties pertinent to the material and listener but also comes from the condition of the class as the external factor. The condition of the classroom might disrupt the students in focusing during the listening process. Moreover, the temperature of the classroom could affect students' concentration. Besides that, when the situation in the class does not support the students, it will make the students cannot gain concentration during listening. Surely, noises around the students will not get good results in listening. Poor quality of tape recorder will make the sound of the speaker not clear and make them lose concentration. No matter how small the interruption was, it might the students to be more difficult in getting information during the listening process. (Bloomfield et al., 2010), noise or distortion in the audio signal becomes an obstacle and interference with the listening process for listeners. Thus, the students should be aware of their interferences in the listening process because it is important to be solved.

Listening to the native speaker through issues, news, or something more interesting such as listening to songs or watching movies are some of the strategies that can be employed. (Azizah & Kusriani, 2017) also stated in her study that the students should understand what they listen to such as intensive attention and vocabulary bank. The teacher must know and apply the listening

strategies for the students to assist them to increase their English proficiency since every student is unique. It is in line with (Astri & Wahab, 2018) who stated that every person has unique abilities and personalities. Besides that, (Ujihanti et al., 2019) in their study stated the desire of the EFL students to improve their capabilities by learning outside the class. They can use English songs, movies, radio, TV news, and other media that provide English establishment.

CONCLUSION

Most students are unable to comprehend listening because of some factors. The existing Interferences are mostly caused by external factors such as unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structure, limited vocabulary, unclear pronounced, unfamiliar accents, and unfamiliar topics. The second factor comes from the listener with some factors such as their attention or lost focus, difficulty recognizing the signal, encountering unknown words, and lack of basic background knowledge. And the last factor is related to the physical setting. Therefore, the students believe that their listening success will be interrupted if the Interferences could not be overcome. They have to defeat it to receive better listening skills.

Based on the result of the research, listening is called one of the difficult skills for students in a foreign language even if they are students in English Education Department. Therefore, the students can use media as a learning tool that aims to increase their listening

skills. Listening to movies, songs, and games becomes one of the solutions that are considered a way to reduce the difficulties effectively. Hopefully, the strategies for improving listening skills can be adopted and designed more in order to help the students increase their listening skills. Because listening is one of the significant skills in English that should be mastered and it provides available input for the students not only for daily communication but also for language learning.

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