

# AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT THE THIRD SEMESTER STUDENTS OF MUHAMMADIYAH KOTABUMI UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023

Zona Erni<sup>1</sup>, Rulik Setiani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>zonaerni7@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>ruлик.setiani@yahoo.com,

<sup>1,2</sup>Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University

**Abstract:** Difficulties in learning about listening comprehension is a condition when students feel worried, nervous, and not confident when listening to English in front of many people. Listening difficulties can also occur in every student due to lack of knowledge of English, fear of communicating, and fear of making mistakes. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that cause students' difficulties in listening comprehension in English subjects. This research uses qualitative research which examines 6 students of the English language education study program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi for the 2022/2023 academic year. The instruments used were interviews and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the factors causing students' English listening comprehension difficulties consist of 1) pronunciation, 2) Speed rapidity, 3) insufficient vocabulary, 4) Speaker accent, 5) lack of concentration, 6) Anxiety 7), Bad quality of recording. Based on the results of the interview analysis of the six students, there were 4 students who on average had difficulty with the seven supporting aspects and there was two student (PAM and LA) who did not find it difficult with the supporting aspects, namely the speaker accent aspect.

**Keywords:** Difficulties, learning, listening comprehension

**Abstrak:** Kesulitan dalam belajar tentang pemahaman mendengarkan adalah kondisi ketika siswa merasa khawatir, gugup, tidak percaya diri dalam hal mendengarkan bahasa Inggris di depan banyak orang. Kesulitan mendengarkan juga dapat terjadi pada setiap siswa karena kurangnya pengetahuan bahasa Inggris, ketakutan berkomunikasi, dan takut membuat kesalahan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor penyebab kesulitan siswa dalam pemahaman mendengarkan pada mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif yang meneliti 6 mahasiswa program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris di Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi tahun akademik 2022/2023. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah wawancara dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa faktor penyebab kesulitan pemahaman mendengarkan bahasa Inggris siswa terdiri dari 1) pengucapan, 2) kecepatan kecepatan, 3) ,kosa kata tidak mencukupi 4) aksen penutur, 5) kurang konsentrasi, 6) kecemasan 7), Kualitas rekaman yang buruk. Berdasarkan hasil dari analisis wawancara terhadap keenam mahasiswa, terdapat empat mahasiswa yang rata rata memiliki kesulitan terhadap tujuh aspek pendukung dan terdapat dua mahasiswa (PAM and LA) yang tidak merasa kesulitan terhadap aspek pendukung yaitu di bagian aspek speaker accent.

**Kata Kunci :** Kesulitan, pembelajaran, pemahaman mendengarkan

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

There are four skill in English to be mastered for students, they are speaking, reading, writing and listeing. But one of the most significant role is istening skill, listening has a considerable impact to develope students language in listening. According to Hasan (2000, p.137-153.) there are several difficulties that learners probably encounter in listening comprehension processes such unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, and the length of the spoken text are the most important factors for listening problems.

In the listening learning process. This indicates the importance of listening as a skill that participants must master for all forms of the TOEFL exam. Even though some participants had difficulty interpreting what the resource person had said, they were still enthusiastic about taking part in this training and always tried to focus on what the resource person had said. When asked by the resource person what difficulties they usually experience in working on listening questions, some said the most difficult part was when listening to different dialects, pronunciation that reached the grammar too quickly. Occasionally, when participants feel bored

and tired, the resource person invites participants to stand for a moment and stretch the muscles that are already stiff and the participants smile again and are enthusiastic again to take part in the training. The resource person for session two not only honed participants' listening skills but also honed participants' reading skills by asking participants to read several texts in the practice examples. Those are the basic skills which are taught to and learnt by students. Listening is one of receptive skills which has a very important role in learning English because listening is the language of modality which is mostly used in every conversation or activity. Hamouda (2013, p.113-155) said that listening skill is very important in acquiring understandable input. Learning does not occur if there will not be any input.

Students can deny that listening is the important skill that has be mastered for students English major, because that listening is the key to acquire a language is to receive language input. Rost (as cited in Vandergrift, 2011) has defined listening as a process of receiving what the speaker actually says, constructing and representing meaning, 8 negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding, and creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

Listening has several aspects. Tyagi (2013,p.12) states that there are six aspects of listening, which are the definition of listening, variety of listening, value and function of listening in life, listening difficulties, and listening strategies. The definition of listening is varied. In everyday communication, it is essential to apply comprehension listening because the inability to distinguish one word from another leads to ineffective communication. In a basic conversation, both sides need to be a good listener, so there is no room for misunderstanding. For example, the words "to pray" can be mistaken as "two prey," which has an entirely different meaning and context may lead to a different understanding. That is why a good listener needs to be able to distinguish them based on their knowledge of grammar and semantics. Listening comprehension is one of the essential skills yet less considered to be a priority in the English teaching and learning process. Richards and Renandya (2002, p.14) state that most English teachers disregard listening. They consider listening as a soft skill that can be obtained outside the school and not to be officially taught by the teacher. Other skill such as writing, speaking, and reading has always been the most focused skill throughout the ages.

Researcher conducted pre-observation on January 11, 2023 in

Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University. Most students of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University still encounter many problems in listening comprehension. From the third semester, students are expected to reach a specific score in their course but only six students who were able to reach the required score. The students may find difficulties in the listening test section, whether from the unclear sounds from the audio, the speed and the dialect of the speaker or from external causes such as the noises that disturb the concentration. From the case of English Education Study Program students, can be seen that listening difficulties are something that cannot be regarded as an easy matter.

Therefore, finding out the difficulties and the causes of the difficulties in listening comprehension become the purpose of this study. This study not only focuses on finding out the difficulties in listening comprehension but also to find out whether there is any significant association between the difficulties in listening comprehension and the causes. Learning about listening comprehension difficulties not only help the students to improve their listening skill but other skills as well because every skill in English has a connection with one another. They should overcome their difficulties and find out the causes so it cannot be a hindrance for them

in the future. This study also aims to encourage further study about listening comprehension difficulties.

Actually, there are many previous researchers who have done the research about listening comprehension based on their strategy. Ahsaniah (2012) difficulties in learning listening comprehension in 11th grade, conducted the research at MAN Negara in Bali. Her result of research reported that the students were lack of vocabulary, so they had difficulty to understand the recording in listening section. The result of the research shown that students' difficulties in learning listening at the eleventh grade of MAN academic year 2011/2012 are the students had difficulty to discriminate voiced and voiceless and minimal pair sounds in phoneme discrimination test, they were also lack of vocabulary. Thus, they had difficulty to understand short dialogue by answering multiple choice items. The students did not understand the grammar that used in the text and they had common mistakes in spelling in filling in the blank question.

A study of Ramadhianti, A., Somba, S (2021) The effectiveness of the project based learning learning model, on the difficulty of listening comprehension of Indonesian EFL students with the participation of 85 students in the basic listening class of the Indraplata

University PGRI English Education Program. As a result, the most listening problems faced by EFL students are the speaker's speaking speed, the various accents used by the speaker, and the long description of the listening text. Several strategies need to be developed to identify these barriers to the listening process. In listening exercises, the instructor must be aware of the student's problems.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher very interested to know what are the difficulties of students in listening skill in listening comprehension students of English education of Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi and there still few who discuss the learning listening skill. In addition, Therefore, the researcher discussed the learning in listening skill at the tertiary level, so that there will more references and wider coverage. This research will discuss what the difficulties in listening skill in listening comprehension. above, the researcher conducts the research with the title "An investigation of difficulties in listening skill listening comprehension at the third semester students at Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi Academic Year 2022/2023"

## **II. METHOD**

The research was categorized as qualitative research. Creswell (2012, p.32) said that qualitative research is handled for explore and understand the meaning individual or group for social humans problems. It can be written or spoken data that is got from observation a person or behavior categories and patterns of research. Also Sugiyono (2016, p.13) defines that qualitative research method is a method of the research that is more emphasis in meaning, inductive, conducted on natural object condition and used word and sentences to present the source of data.

In this research the data was taken from the students. The data sources in this study was be taken from the third semester students of the English education at Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University, North Lampung. The number of students interviewed is six students, consisting of the two students with the lowest scores, two students with medium score and two students with the highest scores at listening comprehension at the third semester.

Data collection technique in this research, the researcher used structure interview and documents as the collected technique is source of qualitative data : interview and documents. The data in this research was analyzed by using interactive model of data analysis where the activities

including reducing the data, displaying the data and taking conclusion and verification.

## **III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION FINDING**

### **1. Pronunciation**

Based on the results of interviews with the six students above, it can be concluded that each of the six subjects experienced difficulties in listening comprehension in pronunciation by native speakers

### **2. Speed Rapidity**

Based on the results of interviews with the six students above, it can be concluded that there are 5 students who feel that the video is played too fast, and there is one student (LA) who feels that sometimes the video is played too fast, sometimes not too fast.

### **3. Insufficient vocabulary**

Based on the results of interviews with the six students above, it can be concluded that each of the six subjects had difficulties in listening comprehension.

### **4. Speaker accent**

Based on the results of the interviews above, five students felt it was difficult and student (PAM) she didn't in understanding speaker accent

## **5. Lack of concentration**

Based on the results of interviews with the six students above, it was concluded that they experienced a lack of concentration in listening comprehension and lack of concentration was a big problem for them.

## **6. Anxiety**

Based on the results of interviews with the six students above, it can be concluded that each of them felt insecure when learning to listen to understanding, especially to their own friends who understood more during the learning process.

## **7. Bad Quality of Recording**

Based on the results of the interviews with the six students above, it can be concluded that each of the subjects felt that the quality of the recording was poor, making it difficult for them to understand the meaning of the recording

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Pronunciation**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in listening to the pronunciation aspect, namely conditions where students have problems with unclear pronunciation by native speakers, information was obtained

that the majority of informants stated that the speakers' pronunciation was not clear.

Pronunciation is the way in which a word or language is spoken. It may refer to the generally agreed sequence of sounds used in pronouncing a particular word or language in a particular dialect ("correct pronunciation") or simply the way certain individuals pronounce the word or language. According to the researcher, unclear pronunciation aspects can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because this learning method involves the five senses of hearing. Speech that is captured by the ear will be translated by the auditory nerve where the incoming sound has clear articulation and vice versa. In addition, the native speaker's unclear pronunciation is due to the presence of minimal pairs, namely two words spoken by a native speaker sound similar because the pronunciation is almost the same and even quite difficult to distinguish but has a different meaning. This causes misunderstanding of informants and often wrong perceptions in listening to English expressions

### **2. Speed rapidity**

Based on the results of the interview regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening comprehension in the aspect of speed, namely the condition

where students have problems listening because the video played by the speaker is too fast, information is obtained that the majority of informants stated that the video played by the speaker was too fast.

Speed speaker has to do with the speed at which a person speaks; it also includes speech fluency problems. Native English speakers actually have a higher speaking speed than native speakers. Consequently, for EFL learners, spoken messages spoken by native speakers are more difficult to understand than those spoken by non-native speakers. Therefore, it is not surprising that the listening test with native speakers is much more difficult than Indonesian English speakers for students.

According to researcher, the speed aspect can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because English is a foreign sentence that takes time to be interpreted or translated into Indonesian so that the brain needs time to process the heard foreign sentence to become information into Indonesian so that it is easier to understand. . Native speakers who speak too fast will cause informants to have difficulty interpreting sentence by sentence spoken by native speakers. In addition, sentences that are too fast will also make it difficult for the informants to remember sentences that have been spoken by native speakers

before, so that it becomes a difficulty factor in learning listening comprehension.

### **3. Insufficient vocabulary**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening listening comprehension aspects of vocabulary, information was obtained that the majority of informants stated that English vocabulary or vocabulary was insufficient.

Vocabulary with a limited vocabulary has a great potential to misinterpret what he hears. This is what happened to the students when they took the listening test. Having poor vocabulary, many of them misunderstood what they heard from the recording. In fact, many of the spoken words they heard during the exam were still new words to them.

According to the researcher, inadequate vocabulary aspects can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because foreign sentences that have never been heard or understood before will cause the vocabulary to not exist in the brain's memory. So that when you hear new vocabulary, your brain cannot translate it into information. Respondents' difficulties in understanding listening to aspects of vocabulary were insufficient due to the lack of activeness of the informants to add to the vocabulary - new vocabulary in English. Moreover, English sometimes

has synonyms for words or even homonyms for writing and pronunciation that are the same but have different meanings

#### **4. Speaker accent**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening comprehension aspects of the speaker's accent, information was obtained that the majority of informants stated difficulties in understanding the speaker's accent.

There are several different accents used in English-speaking countries, including Britain, America, and Australia. Many students admit that taking a hearing test may be difficult for them because of their accent. Since they only know American accents so far, it is quite difficult for them to understand spoken information spoken in British and Australian accents.

According to researcher, aspects of the speaker's accent can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because an unfamiliar accent will cause the brain to have difficulty processing sentences received through hearing into information. Respondents' difficulties in understanding listening to aspects of the speaker's accent were due to the lack of activeness of the informants to learn and practice listening to British accents and Australian accents in addition to American accents. This can

cause the informant to experience difficulties when learning through listening comprehension if the native speaker does not use an American accent.

#### **5. Lack of concentration**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening comprehension aspects of concentration, it was found that the majority of informants said they had difficulty concentrating during listening comprehension.

Another problem faced by students in listening relates to their level of concentration. Literally, this problem seems so psychological. In fact, when doing listening, many students could not focus on every thing said by the recorded speaker. When, for example, they come across a passage that is not clear, they keep thinking about it and therefore cannot move on to the next section, and in the end, they do not get much out of it.

According to the researcher, the aspect of lack of concentration can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because individuals who lack concentration find it difficult to focus on listening through the five senses of hearing, especially listening to English which requires concentration in order to be able to grasp the information conveyed. Respondents' difficulties in

understanding listening to the concentration aspect can be caused by the fact that the informant does not understand the fillers' vocabulary, which are common words that are actually not very important and do not really add important points to a sentence. Usually, native speakers use fillers only as a habit, so that when a native speaker speaks, the informant can ignore the fillers he uses. Thus, informants will focus more on the main points of the sentences expressed.

## **6. Anxiety**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening listening comprehension aspects of anxiety, information was obtained that the majority of informants said they were worried because they did not understand the meaning and felt insecure, especially if friends understood more and understood more.

Anxiety is often an obstacle for students when they learn the four skills in English including listening. Negative feelings of learning a second language appear in students' perceptions of students, who are still at a relatively low level of English proficiency and thus more easily experience feelings of uncomfortable tension.

According to the researcher, the aspect of anxiety can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because anxiety will cause decreased concentration, difficulty to focus, decreased memory so that it can interfere with students' learning. Anxiety arises as a result of internal pressure on the condition that the informant has relatively low English skills compared to other people so that this pressure will be manifested into feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Even though this pressure can be channeled into positive things as encouragement to be even more enthusiastic in learning English.

## **7. Bad quality of recording**

Based on the results of interviews regarding the respondents' difficulties in understanding listening comprehension aspects of poor recording quality, information was obtained that the majority of informants stated that the recording quality was often poor so that it was difficult to hear, especially by students sitting at the back.

The muffled sound produced by a bad recording prevents listeners from understanding what is being said. There must be approaches and techniques that help students overcome these challenges as they learn to understand listening. Meanwhile, external factors such as speaking quickly, mispronouncing words,

having an accent, and poor recording quality may make it difficult for students to understand the material being spoken. English has several accents and pronunciation variations, including American and British. Knowing what a speaker means can be difficult for EFL learners. In addition, poor recording quality will affect students' understanding. The muffled sound produced by a bad recording prevents listeners from understanding what is being said.

According to the researcher, poor recording quality can cause difficulties for respondents in learning listening comprehension because the main senses used during learning are the ears which are then transmitted to the brain in the form of information. If the quality of the recording is poor, the sentences heard will become unclear which will have an impact on students' difficulties in learning.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers with 6 respondents, it can be seen from seven aspects of respondents' difficulties in listening comprehension that there are five difficulties that respondents often face, namely aspects of pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording. These results are in line with Hamouda (2013) theory which states that English is considered one of the most

important languages in the world and among all of the four skills, listening is considered the most important skill. Several causes influence students' difficulties in learning listening comprehension. among others are pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by learners. Understanding students learning difficulties may enable teachers to help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately improve their English listening abilities. Suggestions are made for addressing problems regarding how teachers can help their students overcome listening comprehension problems. The results of this study may also be useful for those who are interested in this field

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Difficulties in understanding listening to the English Education study program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi include: pronunciation, speed rapidly, insufficient vocabulary, speaker accent, lack of concentration, anxiety, bad quality of recording. The dominant difficulties in listening comprehension in the English Language Education study program at Muhammadiyah University

Kotabumi is pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration, anxiety, bad quality of recording. Based on the results of the interviews, students from the highest grades (MAP) and (RZL) experienced difficulties in every aspect, students from the middle grades (M) experienced difficulties in every aspect and students (PAM) experienced difficulties in

every aspect but did not experience difficulties in the speaker accent section. and students with the lowest grades (FO) experience difficulties in every aspect while students (LA) experience difficulties except in the speed rapidity aspect.

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