

LISTENING COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES IN TOEFL FACED BY THE STUDENTS' OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF MAKASSAR

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research were to find out the students' difficulties in listening section of TOEFL and the factors influence students difficulties in listening section of TOEFL faced by the students of English Department at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The method of this research was a qualitative research method. The subject of this research consisted of 10 students at the seventh semester students of English Education Department. This research used snowball sampling technique. The instrument of this research was interview and recorder, consisted of 10 questions. There were some steps in collecting data, they were transcribing, classifying and concluding/interpreting. The result of the research showed that there were three difficulties faced by the students of English Department, namely the first was the difficulties in listening native speaker pronunciation, accent, and dialect. The second was the difficulties in concentration, learning style and lack of interest that have by the listeners (the students itself). The third was the difficulties in content that related with grammar and unfamiliar vocabularies, used by the native speaker in the topic that they were talking about. Mostly the difficulties the students faced were native speaker and content. And the factor influence difficulties were native speaker.

Keywords: Listening Comprehension, Listening Difficulties, TOEFL, Paper Based-Test.

Introduction

English is a crucial language in this era because English is an international language that use to communicate abroad. Learning English is very complex because English has four basic skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. One of the English skills that have to mastered by any learner is listening skill. According to Rost (2002) and Hamouda (2013) defined listening comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners intricate in constructing meaning. Listeners understand the oral input by means of sound

discrimination, prior knowledge, grammatical structures, stress and intonation, and the other linguistic or non-linguistic clues.

To measure how far the knowledge of the students in English is by using TOEFL test. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a test used to measure the level of a person's ability in English. Sudarmono (2013) stated that there are three kinds of TOEFL namely TOEFL PBT (Paper Based Test), TOEFL CBT (Computer Based Test) and TOEFL IBT (Internet Based Test). In TOEFL PBT, there are three skills that measured those are Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression and Reading Comprehension. In this study, the researcher only focuses on Listening Comprehension. In TOEFL, Listening Comprehension section has 50 questions with 40 minutes.

There are some difficulties faced by the students when they are listening to the audio. Such as, the students face several obstacles such as speed of speech, pronunciation, accent of the speaker, lack of vocabularies, unfamiliar words. And also, the condition of audio can not produces clear sounds. Through listening the audio the situation in class can affects to the students. It is not only from the speaker's elements, difficulties of listening comprehension also involves prior knowledge and learning style of the students. Anderson and Lynch (1988) argue that the listeners try to get the meaning from what they hear, and try to understand what the speaker says.

Review of Related Literature

Rini (2017) conducted a research about revealing students' listening comprehension difficulties and strategies in intermediate listening class. said that the difficulties involved the vocabulary, speed of speech, accent, pronunciation, condition of class, concentration and motivation. Renukadevi (2014), her research was about the role of listening in language acquisition: the challenges and strategies in teaching listening, said that listener's concentration becomes the major problem in listening. Thus, the lack of concentration is considered as a

major problem because the shortest break in attention can impair the comprehension seriously.

There were some correlation among the prior research and this research. Most of prior research discussed about difficulties in listening and the factors influence difficulties faced by the students. So, based on the result of the previous research above, the research concluded that there were so many difficulties and factors influence difficulties in listening that the students faced in learning English especially listening. Therefore, through this study, the researcher want to know more about the difficulties especially in listening section of TOEFL faced by English Department students at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

Definition of Listening Comprehension

Jafari and Hashim (2015) emphasized that listening is a channel for perceptible input and more than 50 percent of the time learners spend in learning a foreign language faithful to listening.

Definition of TOEFL

Wisuri (2016: 3) TOEFL is a standardized test to measure English language abilities. It's commonly most taken by international students and non-native speakers who wish to attend such a US university, but it can also be taken to prove the English skills to employer, TOEFL can be taken at over 4500 test center worldwide and the test is offered 2 or 3 weekends per month in many countries (but sometimes less often, depending on the taken place).

Kinds of TOEFL

There are a few times TOEFL has changed its type of test to a better way to measure non-native English speaker proficiency. There are three kinds of TOEFL test: PBT (paper based test), CBT (computer based test), and iBT (internet based test).

a. PBT (Paper Based Test)

Paper based test is a TOEFL test where questions and answer are written. There are two objectives of TOEFL PBT test. First, to evaluating

students' progress. Second, as another option when CBT cannot be held in the area. The TOEFL PBT has three sections namely Listening Comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading. The score ranges from 310 to 677 (Sharpe, 1999).

b. CBT (Computer Based Test)

TOEFL CBT test has four sections; listening, structure, reading, and writing. The tool that used in CBT test is computer. This TOEFL CBT is a flexible test, test questions will not be the same every participant who registered in the same day (Sharpe, 1999).

c. iBT (internet based test)

Internet based test is a TOEFL test has four sections: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The TOEFL iBT create in a more academic English circumstance. With combined test section more than one skill (ETS, 2009).

Listening Comprehension Section of TOEFL PBT

According to ETS, the PBT's listening comprehension section is supposed to "measure the ability to understand spoken English." Test-takers are given 30-40 minutes to answer 50 questions. So, the text-takers have 12-15 seconds to answer one question. The questions in this section are all multiple choice, and they are based on audio recordings of conversations and lectures. Questions of part B and C cover issues as well as factual information in the lectures or conversations. There three parts of listening section of the TOEFL PBT

a. Part A (Short Conversation)

Part A includes very short dialogue from two-person conversations. Each of two speakers have one line in the conversation (a man and a woman), followed by narrator who asks a question about the exchange. There are 30 questions of the listening comprehension section's. Part A question generally ask about the meaning of the statements by the speakers or the actions that will be taken by the speakers according to the information given.

b. Part B (Long Conversation)

Part B is longer conversations between two speakers (approximately 10 lines of text), consist of 8 questions and students answer several questions about each conversation, provided by a narrator on the recording. The topic of part B more academic and the material is about history, science, and organization in university than part A.

c. Part C (Talk)

Students listen a dialogue approximately one minute in length, the dialogue more longer than part A and B. And then answer questions read by the narrator. test-takers are given 12 seconds per question to record their answer choices on a provided answer sheet.

The Difficulties Faced by the Students' in Listening

According to Yagang (1994) as a prove of why listening is difficult can be seen from four sources: the message to be listened to, the speaker, the listener, and physical setting.

a. The Message

Content. There are so many learners feel more difficult to listen a taped text than to read the same text on a piece of paper, because taped text occur eyewink. While reading material can be read as long as reader wants.

Linguistic Features. Liaison (combine words in speech when the second word begins with a vowel, e.g., an orange/ @nOrIndZ) and elision (produce sound or sounds, e.g., suppose may be pronounced /sp@uz/ in speed speech) are common phenomena that make students difficult to differentiate or identify individual words in the stream of speech.

b. The speaker

Ur (1984:7) the students find difficulties to understand the accent of the speaker and the way of native speaker pronounce certain word, such

as: Spoken prose, characterized by an even pace, volume, pitch, and intonation.

c. The listener

The students feel difficult to concentration in construing sounds, words, and sentence that they do not know in long period.

d. Physical Setting

Listening material from the audio is not easy, the environment and the condition of audio in the class when test begin it is very influence.

Factors that Influence the Difficulties in Listening Comprehension in TOEFL

During the listening process, the listeners have many factors that can determine their comprehension in listening. The factors come from the internal and external factor. It means that the listeners itself and learning environment can give the effects in comprehension.

According to Brown and Yule (1983:24) there are four major factors that can affect the listening process relates to material or linguistic aspect. The first is the speed and the accent of speaker can determine how the listeners understand the topic of discussion. The listeners need time to process the information from the speaker. Then, if the speaker speaks faster, the listeners have the less time to think. The second is the listeners interest and respond will affect the difficulties of listening. It may affect the students to have the lack of motivation because they have low interest and response. The third is the content that relates with grammar, vocabulary, and information structure. Listening process will obstruct if the listeners have bad grammar, poor of vocabulary, and bad information structure. Last, the supporting items in listening can also influence the accuracy of listeners understanding, such as diagram, pictures, etc.

Method

This research study was a descriptive study and therefore adopts a qualitatively. This research used one variable; the variable of this research is Listening comprehension difficulties and the factors influence students'

difficulties in TOEFL faced by the seventh semester students of English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The research used snowball sampling as the technique for selecting sampling and the subject of this research is the 10 students at the seventh semester at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

Analysis Data

In analyzing the collected data, the researcher used transcribing, coding, classifying, and concluding/interpreting, to find difficulties and factors influence difficulties faced by the students.

Result and Discussion

1. The Difficulties that Students Faced in Listening Section of TOEFL Test.

Based on the data from interview, the researcher found some difficulties in listening section that the students faced, those were native speaker, listener and content.

- a. Native speaker : The difficulties that the students faced in native speaker such as the students cannot control how quickly native speaker talk, listening native speaker pronunciation, dialect, accent and also abbreviation used by the native speaker.
- b. Content : The difficulties that the students faced in content such as unfamiliar vocabularies, grammar and information structure used by the native speaker in the topic that they were talking about.
- c. Listener : The difficulties that the students faced such as the listener lack of concentration, motivation, interest to learn, bad of learning style and lack of vocabularies.

Based on the interview that had conducted, the researcher found the difficulties that the students faced in listening section of TOEFL test was native speaker. Mostly the students said that native speaker as was the first difficulties they faced in listening section of TOEFL because there were many problems such

as the students cannot control how quickly the native speaker talk, pronunciation of speaker, dialect and accent. The second was content, the students said that The difficulties that the students faced in content such as unfamiliar vocabularies, grammar and information structure used by the native speaker in the topic that they were talking about and the students felt confused to catch the meaning of the topic. Moreover, there was some student also faced the difficulties from theirself like they rarely to listen conversation with strong accent, their learning style, their interest to learn but it was not a serious difficulty like native speaker and content. We can see the result of the interview below:

1. What are your problems in Listening Section of TOEFL Test ?

Based on the interview that has been done, the result of the students' answered toward the question "*What are you problem in listening section of TOEFL test ?*" shown below. Most of the students answered as follows:

Student 3: "*My problem in the listening section e... sometimes I hard to understand the e... pronunciation of the speaker and I have e... miss understanding about what is the meaning*".(My problem in the listening section sometimes I hard to understand the pronunciation of the speaker and I have miss understanding about what is the meaning).

Student 10: "*The first one is e... lack of vocabularies and the second is about the native spraker that e... speak so fast so I cannot e... hear clearly*". (The first one is lack of vocabularies and the second is about the native spraker that speak so fast so I cannot hear clearly).

2. Have you got problems with Native Speaker ? what are you problems ?

Student 5: "*Yes I have problem with native speaker sometimes you know when they are speaking very fast with their strong accent and e... with their pronunciation is not clear for me it is very confusing and difficult for me to e... mengerti yang dikatakan speaker*". (Yes I have problem with native speaker sometimes you know when they are speaking very fast with their strong accent and with their pronunciation is not clear for me it is very confusing and difficult for me to understand what the speaker talking about).

Student 7: *“Yes I have problem ee.. the problem with native speaker if I sometimes not understand what the pronunciation they are said or the vocabulary the native speaker say”*. (Yes I have problem the problem with native speaker if I sometimes not understand what the pronunciation they are said or the vocabulary the native speaker say).

3. In your opinions, is the Lack of Vocabularies the most important difficulty? why ?

Student 2: *“ Ya of course if you lack of vocabularies e... of course then you e... cannot understand what they mean and then you cannot write anything because you lack of vocabulary”*. (Yes of course if you lack of vocabularies of course then you cannot understand what they mean and then you cannot write anything because you lack of vocabulary).

Student 10: *“Yah, I think the lack of vocabularies is most important difficulty because we e... cannot understand what the native speaker say if we don't have e... many vocabulary”*. (Yes, I think the lack of vocabularies is most important difficulty because we cannot understand what the native speaker say if we don't have many vocabulary).

2. Factors Influence the Difficulties Faced by the Students in Listening Section of TOEFL Test.

Based on the result of interview that had conducted to the students, the researcher found a few factors influence difficulties in listening section of TOEFL, they were: the first was native speaker, so many students said the factors influence their difficulties was native speaker because native speaker speak so fast, use strong accent and dialect when they pronounce a certain word, and also their pronunciation is not clear and use abbreviation. The second was content, The factors influence difficulties that the students faced in content such as unfamiliar vocabularies, grammar and information structure used by the native speaker in the topic that they were talking about. The third was listeners, the factors influence that students faced such as lack of concentration when the audio was starting, lack of motivation and interest to learn and they rarely to listen

conversation in English. The last was supporting items such as, the condition of the class and the quality of sound system.

Based on the data that had concluded, we can see mostly students said that native speaker as their factor influence difficulties in TOEFL that faced by the students of English Department at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. We can see the result of the interview below:

1. What Factors Influence the Difficulties in Listening Section of TOEFL?

Student 1: “ *And factors e... I think e... native speaker also and my vocabularies to hear that e... listening test*”. (And factors I think native speaker also and my vocabularies to hear that listening test).

Student 9: “*I think the factor influence the difficulties in listening section of TOEFL e... apa is the accent of the speaker*”. (I think the factor influence the difficulties in listening section of TOEFL is the accent of the speaker).

Student 10: “ *I think e... apa yah the factors is external factor and e... maybe also internal factor*”. (I think the factors is external factor and maybe also internal factor).

2. Native Speaker, Listener and Content. Which one is the Most Factor Influence your Difficulties in Listening Section of TOEFL Test ? Explain why ?

Student 2: “*kayaknya Listeners. Karena listening membutuhkan fokus dari students in listen to something that speaker says. Listeners is the big determiners in listening. If the listeners do a great job, the listening section will run well*”. (Listeners. Because listening needs students’ focus in listen to something that speaker says. Listeners is the big determiners in listening. If the listeners do a great job, the listening section will run well).

Student 5: “*menurutku native speaker kak as the most factor that that can influence my difficulties in listening section of TOEFL because I my self kadang-kadang ada problems sama native speakers khususnya when they are speaking sangat cepat with their strong accent and when they pronounce certain words which is not too clear pronunciation of it. At that moment, I am having*

difficulty to understand well apa yang di bicarakan". (Native speaker as the most factor that that can influence my difficulties in listening section of TOEFL because I myself sometimes have problems with native speakers especially when they are speaking very fast with their strong accent and when they pronounce certain words which is not too clear pronunciation of it. At that moment, I am having difficulty to understand well what they are talking about).

Student 6: *"Content, karna kadang-kadang they use vocabulary yang saya tidak pernah mendengar sebelumnya, and they use phrase verb a lot". (Content, because sometimes they use vocabulary that I never heard before, and they use phrase verb a lot).*

Student 10: *"Native speaker karena saya selalu have difficulty in guessing the words or sentences spoken by the speaker". (Native speaker because I always have difficulty in guessing the words or sentences spoken by the speaker).*

Student 7: *" kesulitan saya yaitu native speaker karena setiap native speaker memiliki pronunciation yang berbeda sehingga menjadi kendala bagi saya menangkap apa pesan yang ingin disampaikan".(My difficulty is native speaker because every native speaker has different pronunciation it is make me difficult to catch the meaning of the message that the speaker said).*

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the reseacher would take conclusions as follows:

1. The difficulties that the students faced in listening of TOEFL were: the first was native speaker, because native speaker speak very fast, strong accent, dialect and pronunciations used by the speaker. The second was contents, because unfamiliar vocabularies, grammar and information structure used by the speaker.
2. The factors influence students difficulties in listening of TOEFL was native speaker.

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