

## EXPLORING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT SECOND SEMESTER ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF MAKASSAR

Nurinda Permatasari<sup>1</sup>, Ummi Khaerati Syam<sup>2</sup>, Ika Sastrawati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: August 20, 2022 Revised: September 15, 2022 Accepted: Decmeber 28, 2022 Published: June 30,2023</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>learning listening, Listening comprehension, Students'difficulties, Material factors, English Education.</i></p>	<p>The objective of this research was to determine the difficulties faced by students in learning listening comprehension from the listening material factor. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. The results of the research from questionnaires and FGD showed that there were seven difficulties faced by students when studying listening comprehension based on listening material factors. First, the difficulty of unfamiliar words. 50% of students have this difficulty because they lack vocabulary. second, the difficulty of unfamiliar topics. students find it difficult when trying to understand the discourse, 40% experienced by students. third, difficulties in interpreting the meaning of spoken texts, especially when dealing with words that have multiple meanings, were also experienced by 40% of students in this study. fourth, difficulty due to the length of the spoken text which causes loss of concentration and motivation of students due to boredom, 60% of students find it difficult with the length of the spoken text. fifth, the difficulty in the type of input (eg the type of input from direct teaching by the lecturer) the fact that the listening comprehension class faced by the respondents was an online class, which made students experience various problems such as disruption of the teaching and learning process. the process of receiving information from lecturers due to unstable networks in some areas. sixth, 60% of students face difficulties in verbal instruction, because lecturers or native speakers have different accents and the last is difficulty in understanding when the speaker speaks very fast, based on the findings of this study it was found that the speaker's speaking speed is a difficulty experienced by all students.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC BY-SA</a> license.</i></p> 
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<p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Nurinda Permatasari, English Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, 259 Sultan Alauddin Road, Makassar City, Rappocini 90221, Indonesia. Email: 105351108418@unismuhmakassar.ac.id</p>	

## INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia English is a foreign learnt as language, so it is not surprising that students find listening difficult. Rost, (2015) found that listening is a complex process that requires the listener to understand the information from what he or she hears, and that listening also helps us of realizes effective communication. According to Wang (2020), listening is one of two types of interactive activities. This is the process of receiving an audible symbol. The first step in listening is to receive sound waves through your ears and enter the nerve impulses that are transmitted to your brain According to some previous studies from Hamouda (2013) and Abidin (2013), who completed related studies, they concluded that to help students improve their listening skills, language lecturers should understand students' listening difficulties in understanding listening texts and instruct effective listening strategies to help students solve their listening difficulties. In addition, knowing the difficulties of their students is needed for lecturers, students as a subject have a significant role in developing their listening skills. The success of students in listening depends on how they can identify and solve their difficulties. If students know a problem is affecting their hearing, it will be easy to find a solution. They will study hard to improve their listening comprehension skill.

The skill of listening effectively is complex, challenging, and life-long, a dynamic process that requires a skilled integration of attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. Hamouda (2013) emphasizes the importance of listening skills is to understand input. Learning will not happen if there is no input whatsoever. The importance of listening in communication is emphasized by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011). Among the four general communication skills ~ listening, speaking, reading, and writing ~ Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) cite listening as the most important. According to Anwar (2018), listening comprehension is an integrated and creative interaction process that is given by the speaker and accepted by the listener, including linguistic or nonverbal knowledge. Hearing not only plays a role in language ability in language performance, but is also an important means of learning a second language in communication. Steinberg (2007) and Azmi Bingol et al (2014) define listening comprehension as a person's ability to recognize others through the senses, auditory organs and allocate meaning to messages for him to understand.

Mendelsohn (1994) noted listening counts for 40-50%, speaking for 25-30%, reading for 11-16%, and writing for 9%. Every other form of verbal communication, both inside and outside the classroom, is surpassed by listening time daily (Wolvin and Coakley 1988). Listening comprehension is considered an important skill for learners who wish to learn a language (Trans & Dong, 2020). They further added that listening skill was considered as the most difficult skill for students to study carefully. If students are not skilled listeners, they may face difficulties when exchange information verbally, Bingol and Celik (2014) state that students often have difficulty understanding the meaning of unfamiliar speaker vocabulary and accents. These difficulties can be caused by the quality of the recorded material, the physical condition of the student, unfamiliar topics, unfamiliar words, and the length and speed of listening.

Listening comprehension is also a language skill, and many students consider it a basic language skill and do not consider it important. They leave listening comprehension behind other language skills. This means that many students fail the listening comprehension test one by one. This also applies to second semester students majoring in English education, many students just sit quietly in the lab during lessons because of difficulties in understanding listening. From the description above, the researcher decided to conduct a study entitled "Exploring Students' Difficulties in Learning Listening Comprehension at second Semester English Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar".

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a Descriptive Qualitative Research. Descriptive Qualitative Research produces descriptive data in the form of words or words from people, as well as observed behavior (Bogdan & Taylor, 2012). This research was used to investigate the students' difficulties in learning listening comprehension at second semester Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. It is a systematic subjective approach to describing and giving meaning to life experiences.

Open questionnaire and FGD (focus group discussion) were research instruments. The answers to the questions in the questionnaire were used to obtain detailed and descriptive information about the topic. The questionnaire has been adopted from the research (Asmawati, 2017). Questionnaires were used to determine the difficulties faced by second semester students at the University of Muhammadiyah Makassar. Then the results of the FGD were used to deepen the students' difficulties in learning listening comprehension. This instrument relates to the type of data required by the researcher.

After collecting data from students with an open questionnaire in the form of google and conducting FGD (Focus Group Discussion), the data from both were analyzed based on the answers given by the students. The steps in data analysis are as follows: memorizing data, describing data, and classifying data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The Analysis of the Data Collected from Questionnaire

The material is the main cause of listening problems. Some of the problems found in listening comprehension are unfamiliar words, unfamiliar topic, difficulties to interpret the meaning of spoken text,

#### a. Problems pertinent to unfamiliar word

Based on the results of data collection, there are about 50% of students who have difficulty in using unfamiliar words including jargon or idioms that interfere with their listening comprehension. a student said "*I usually get stuck without repeating spoken instructions because it is not clear enough and if it contains some foreign words*" this means that vocabulary greatly affects their listening comprehension, plus the online learning process which then makes listening comprehension ability limited. this unfamiliar word continues to be their problem.

b. Problems pertinent to unfamiliar topic

From the results of the questionnaire distributed, many students chose unfamiliar topics as difficulties in listening comprehension. There are about 40% of students find it difficult due to unfamiliar topics. The responses of some students showed that if they were faced with a topic that was less familiar to them, they would lose concentration on the content of the material provided. sometimes the dialogues or topics that are presented are topics about business or economics, so that many students do not understand the terms in economics which then makes it difficult for them to capture the learning content. This problem is also affected due to the students' lack of understanding about the topic around it, therefore they need to increase their knowledge by reading and listening.

c. Difficulty in interpret the meaning of spoken text

Spoken texts are one of the causes of students' loss of concentration during the listening comprehension learning process, this is what makes it difficult for students to catch what the speaker is saying. There are 40% of students who choose interpret long spoken texts as the difficulties they face in listening comprehension. the students find it difficult when dealing with long spoken texts because it is difficult to interpret what the speaker has just said, this is also due to the many unfamiliar words and also the lack of vocabulary understanding. One of the students said that when he listened to a long-spoken text, he tended to get tired because he had to understand a lot of sounds or syntax for a long time which eventually made him sometimes get distracted and then lose concentration.

d. Problem pertinent length of spoken text

Like the previous response, the length of the spoken text greatly affects students' listening comprehension. It can be seen that 60% of respondents answered yes about this difficulty. One of the students answered *"Yes. The more discussions in the text make the students more difficult to understand the content of the reading"* another student also said *"Yes, it is very influential, because it can make my focus lost or constrained"* this proves that the length of the spoken text is one of the reasons the main difficulty of students understanding the speaker. Long oral texts also make students easily bored; therefore, the length of oral texts is one of the difficulties for students in learning listening comprehension.

e. Problem pertinent the input type

In addition to the number of unfamiliar words and topics in the spoken text, this type of input greatly supports listening comprehension learning. Based on the questionnaire data, many respondents received learning through live teaching from lecturers. especially the fact that the listening comprehension class faced by the respondents was an online class, which made students experience various problems such as the disruption of the process of receiving information from lecturers due to unstable networks in several places and different lecturers' accents. making it difficult for students to understand. Another student said that *"Sometimes the audio material given by the lecturer cannot be understood because without an explanation from the lecturer"* it seems that students have difficulty when the material provided does not get

additional explanation from the lecturer, as a further illustration so that they can understand the meaning of what is being said. has been said.

f. Problem in understanding spoken instruction

Based on data above 50% of respondents who have difficulty if the explanation of information is presented with verbal instructions. one student said "I usually get stuck without repeating verbal instructions because it is not clear enough and if it contains some unfamiliar words" he then has difficulty understanding the information presented especially if the instructions given are long. some of them said it was not too difficult in oral instruction.

g. Problem in understanding when the speakers talk very fast

Based on data from the questionnaire all respondents answered yes to this difficulty. One of the students said "Yes, when the speaker speaks fast it is difficult for me to catch the speaker's meaning" the other answered "yes, because sometimes I don't know what he is saying". This they admit because of their lack of vocabulary, so their listening comprehension is difficult.

## Discussion

Learning listening comprehension is a very important skill for language learners (Trans & Dong, 2020), and it is also a difficult skill for a student to master. if students are less skilled at this ability, they may have difficulty exchanging verbal information. Because it is an important and difficult skill, this research wants to reveal the difficulties of students in learning listening comprehension, especially on material factors. Based on the findings, this section explains and interprets the findings by analyzing and reflecting on the related literature review to get a deeper understanding of the difficulties in learning listening comprehension from the point of view of the material factors.

1. Problem pertinent to unfamiliar words

Based on the above findings, the data shows that unfamiliar words result in students' loss of concentration during listening comprehension. The number of foreign words found is one of the causes of the lack of vocabulary. Limited vocabulary, poor grammar is also some of the factors that increase listening problems (Graham, 2006). Increasing high vocabulary is able to minimize difficulties like this, because when the speaker uses words that are rarely known to the listener, the listener stops and thinks about the word that was just mentioned and makes him lose information afterwards.

2. Problem pertinent to unfamiliar topics

From the findings above, one of the main difficulties for students when learning listening comprehension is unfamiliar topics. According to Underwood (1989) listeners may need contextual knowledge. Familiar knowledge and textbooks can make communication easier for listeners. Listeners can sometimes understand the facial meaning of a passage, but they can have substantial problems understanding the full meaning of a passage unless they are familiar with it. Meanwhile, in this study, it was found that many students lost concentration in listening comprehension because they were not familiar with the topic they were listening to.

3. Problem in interpret the meaning of spoken text

Helgesen and Brown (2007) Listeners actively pay attention and work to understand and interpret what they hear. In this study, focus on listening is needed so that it is easy to interpret the given spoken text, but the presence of long spoken texts makes students finally tired and then their focus is disturbed and even loses their focus, this is what was experienced by 40% of students in this study. The longer the spoken text he hears, the more difficult it is for him to interpret it.

4. Problem pertinent length of spoken text

Based on the data found, there are 60% of respondents have difficulty in long oral texts. (Al-Thiyabi, 2014), his study found 69% of students or about more than half of them suffer from such problems. students also think that the longer the spoken text they hear, the more difficult it is for them to digest the information. because long spoken texts must contain a lot of information. Therefore, lecturers need to find ways to improve students' listening comprehension by minimizing long oral texts.

5. Problem pertinent the input type

Input type is a feature related with a specific type of text, such as lecturer, tv/ or radio, face-to-face conversation, or audio material. In this study, students are faced with many types of direct teaching input by lecturers. and later admitted to having difficulties due to technical issues such as poor internet connection, because classes were run online. there are also difficulties caused by the audio material given to students. Sometimes the audio material given by the lecturer cannot be understood due to the lack of explanation from the lecturer.

6. Problem in understanding spoken instruction

Another problem is that students have difficulty understanding verbal instructions, based on the findings, 50% of respondents faced this difficulty. They find it difficult again due to their lack of vocabulary and eventually make them misunderstand some of the instructions. The number of presentations of students with difficulties that are higher than those of those without difficulties proves that their listening comprehension is still inadequate.

7. Problem in understanding when the speakers talk very fast

Most of the English foreign language students have great difficulty in this matter. Based on the above findings, it shows that the speaker's speaking speed affects students' listening comprehension. all respondents admitted to having difficulty understanding information when the speaker spoke quickly. (Al-Thiyabi, 2014), he stated that speaking fast was the first reason for students' listening problems. This problem arises, of course, because the listener cannot play the speaker's speaking speed.

The Analysis of the Data Collected from Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The FGD was conducted with 5 student volunteers as discussed in the research methodology. This FGD was used to find out in depth about students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The questions from the FGD are generally taken from the questionnaire. All questions in the FGD were in Indonesian because when they were asked to answer in English, they felt embarrassed. So, they are allowed to use Indonesia.

- a The first question was asked to find out the problems that affect students' listening comprehension as listeners. The results show that all respondents have various answers, some of them have difficulty in listening comprehension because they have low knowledge of grammar and lack of vocabulary so that they often encounter unfamiliar words such as when finding sentences with idioms. Respondent 3 explained one of the idioms she got *"I once got a sentence that contained the word **"get out of town"** I thought it meant out of town, but it actually means **"I don't believe it"** and this makes me confused to receive information"* Other problems are the length of the material and usually there is no additional explanation, the speaker speaks too fast and there are no subtitles, and the pronunciation is not clear, sometimes they have difficulty distinguishing some words because they can't hear it clearly. for example through, though, thought.
- b The second question was asked to find out what made it difficult for them to listen to comprehension content material. The results of the second question showed that all participants answered that the difficulty in the content material was an unfamiliar topic. Respondent 2 said *"videos that are usually directed by lecturers to be watched on youtube are often themed on politics or business, moreover the topic is about the situation abroad, this usually disturbs my mood to digest the information because I feel foreign to what the speaker is talking about in the video"*, the other difficulty is a long listening conversation. as in the results of the questionnaire, in this FGD almost all respondents also admitted that it was difficult if the material given was in the form of long spoken text because it made them lose focus in the middle of the materi, the cause was that they were getting tired of listening and also sometimes found words that were not recognized among all conversations or long material, which then makes them lose concentration to listen to the next sentence or information. Another difficulty is misinterpreting the meaning of words in the material. Respondent 1 said that she often experience this difficulty *"I once came across a word that confused me, the word was **"goat"**, as far as I know goat means an animal, but it turns out that after repeatedly matching the context of the previous word and searching on google, "goat" has a meaning. another is **"the best of all time"** and this is one of the slang words"*. Many words have more than one meaning and if not used correctly in the appropriate context, students will get confused. In addition there was two respondent said that the difficulty in listening to the material was caused by by variations in the accent of the material and the accent of the lecturer in class.
- c The third question was asked to find out what kind of input they often got during learning listening comprehension. Similar to the questionnaire respondents, FGD respondents also learned through online classes, they said that the type of input they received most often was live teaching by lecturers, not infrequently audio material or video links on youtube were also given which they were then assigned to interpret the content of a given audio or video. The difficulty they then faced was that the information from the lecturers was not clearly conveyed due to the poor quality of the

internet and also the difficulty of understanding the audio or video material given due to its lengthy content and also containing unfamiliar topics such as a political topic.

- d The fourth question was asked to find out whether students had difficulty when instructions in listening comprehension material were given in the form of oral instructions, all respondents answered yes. According to them, verbal instructions are difficult because sometimes they don't sound clear, especially if native speakers speak quickly. " Yes, this is also one of the difficulties that I usually face. Because native speakers speak so fast that I can't understand the instructions given".
- e The last question was asked to find out whether the respondent had difficulty understanding the listening comprehension material when the speaker spoke quickly. respondent 3 said that "when the speaker speaks too fast, it is difficult for me to understand what is being said, even if the words are familiar to me. The native speaker speaks too fast so I sometimes hear all the words as a whole". In this case, the difficulty with delivery speed was due to the unfamiliarity with listening to native speakers. Students need to practice listening and familiarize themselves with listening to native speakers.

## CONCLUSION

Observing the data in the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that it is true that the problems in listening comprehension faced by students are not only from the students themselves but also from material factors and the listening comprehension environment. Therefore, the students should study hard and practice more to improve their listening comprehension. The 7 finding difficulties based on the material factors faced by students, the speaker's speaking speed is the difficulty experienced by all students. the results of the analysis of all the difficulties faced, the main factor of students having difficulty in learning listening comprehension due to lack of vocabulary which results in loss of concentration and difficulty understanding unfamiliar words and unfamiliar topics.

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