

## THE FACTORS INFLUENCE STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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### ABSTRACT

Some problems in listening comprehension often faced by the students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai, such as low listening comprehension, doing assignment without showing good comprehension on answer sheet. The descriptive research aims to identify the factors influence the students' problem in listening comprehension at the second semester of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. in academic year 2017/2018. The instruments are questionnaire, interview and documentation. The finding of the research shows two factors influence the students' listening comprehension, the internal and external factors. Internal factors are the students' self-rating to listening comprehension, Students' Perceptions Related to Other Language Skills, Strategy to Enhance Listening Skills, students' Statement about the Content of the Listening Text, Students' Concentration. The external factors are the Speaker and the physical setting.

**Keywords:** *Factors, Listening Comprehension.*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the important language in the world is English. Many people speak English either as the first, second language, or foreign language. It plays an important rule to access the scientific, and technical knowledge developed in many countries in the world. Good English is also a main point as requirement of those for seeking jobs and continuing study in other country. Those who have low English are not favorable than those who have good English.

There are four language skills that acquired by students of English Study Program

namely listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. All of those skills are important. Each of the skills is connected. The students learn the language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing to build the students' language skills at English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. There are 144 credits which must be taken by the students to get the Bachelor degree.

Listening is one of the required subjects with 2 credits which are held in the first and second semester. The students must be used to listen English text and have listening comprehension of the spoken text. Listening comprehension is an active skill that has many processes. "Listening comprehension is as a "highly complex problem-solving activity" that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills Byrnes (1984). In addition, listening comprehension is as the vehicle to get elements of grammatical structure and new vocabulary to be contextualized in communicative discourse. Many students cannot pass the passing grade, and must rejoin the class on the semester.

Some definitions of listening stated by the experts. Listening is a vital mental capacity one of the principal means by which we understand and take a part in the world around us. Rost (1994 : p.1). Marleni (2015) states that listening is a language skill with a goal to understand spoken text, and build the language skill to communicate in the real situation. The active skill produce the language. The learners know how to express the language. Meanwhile Brown (1991) states that listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get the meaning from something we hear. This statement is supported also by Rost (1994: p.2) that listening is a process that triggered by our attention. In psychological term, attention is an excitation of nerve pathways in the brain to organize in coming stimuli in an efficient way. The purpose of attention is to help up organize and use what we see and hear.

Comprehension is the mind act or power of understanding (Hornby, 1987: 174). Brown and Yule (1997) state that comprehension is not simply the reduction of uncertainty, as has sometimes been claimed; it is also the integration into experience.

Marleni (2015) says that listening comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning of spoken text which is called as the extensive listening or meaning focused listening which concerned on the understanding of meaning with a top down approach as the basic skill

to master other language skills. Therefore, comprehension will be usually found in the learners' mind. It is clear that listening comprehension is not only a process of identifying sounds, but also a process of catching the idea of the spoken text whether it is stated explicitly or implicitly. Nunan (2003) says that listening was seen as a major source of comprehensible input. Language learning textbooks began including listening activities that were not simply presentation of language to be produced. They were listening activities for input, the beginning of the kinds of listening tasks common in books today. Listening comprehension is one of the most important and fundamental of the four skills in language learning. Meanwhile, Buck (2001) says that listening comprehension as a process, a very complex process, and if teachers want to measure it, they must first understand how that process works. If teachers consider how the language comprehension system works, it is obvious that a number of different types of knowledge are involved: both linguistic knowledge and nonlinguistic knowledge.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) explain that in listening comprehension of narratives, a teacher can use multiple choice tests. In this case, the learners should listen to the story before answering the questions. Listening comprehension test can be used to measure students appropriate with indicators in listening comprehension as the following: finding the general information, identifying the setting, identifying the problem, identifying the resolution in the story, making inference, and finding the meaning of words

In this case, Listening Comprehension is one of subjects which is provided by English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. Based on the curriculum, the students must take it with a required subject named Listening Skill. It means the students must join the subject, Listening Skill and get good score, then they can join Listening Comprehension class. Listening Comprehension has two credits which is provided at the second semester of the academic year.

Sugiyono (2009) states the problem is defined as a deviation between it should be with what is really going on, between theory and practice, between the rules of the execution, of plans to the executive. Mardiyati (1994:45) says that problems in learning process are the condition in learning process with some obstacles to get the goal of learning process. The

obstacles give effects on psychology, sociology, or physiology of the students.

Abdurrahman (2008:11-12) classifies the problems in learning process are 1) *Developmental learning disabilities* is a problem which is difficult to identified by parents or teachers, because there is no a systematic measurement for that. This problem is caused by prerequisite skills. Prerequisite skills are the skills which must be mastered by the students first then other skills. 2) *Academic learning disabilities* is the problem which caused by the failures in academic learning which included the following skills; reading, speaking, listening, and writing. This problem will be realized by parents or teachers when the students failed in one of the academic skills. The problem which will be analyzed in this research is the problem in academic learning that is the students' problem in listening comprehension which can be measured and known by the lecturer.

According Willis (1981, p.134) who lists a series of skills for listening dealing with problems, which she calls „enabling skills“. To quote a few are: predict what people are going to talk about, guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking, using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand, understanding inferred information, e.g., speakers' attitudes or intentions. Buck (2001) identifies numerous problems which can be confronted in listening tasks such as unknown vocabularies, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate, and unfamiliar.

There are many causes of the problems that affect the listening comprehension. Underwood (1998) organizes the major listening comprehension problems as follows: the first problem is a lack of control the speed of the speaker, and the fact that the listener cannot control the speed of the speaker. Many English language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension is that the listeners cannot control the speed of the speaker. It is impossible for the listeners to control the speed from an uncontrolled source. For example, if the listener is listening to a radio broadcast, they cannot ask for a slower speed. The second problem is the inability to have things repeated. The inability to have things repeated is something the listeners must face when exposed to an uncontrolled source. Listeners are not always in the position to have the speakers to repeat their speech. For example, if they are listening to the radio or watching television, they are unable to ask for repetition.

The third problem is the limited vocabulary of the listeners. This is one of the most significant problems with listening. When listening to speech from an uncontrollable source, the listeners may be distracted by a word that they are unfamiliar with. A listener needs to understand the vocabulary in order to comprehend what they are listening to. For example, if the speaker chooses words which the listeners do not know, it will be difficult for them to understand what they are hearing. Encountering unknown words may cause listeners to stop and think about meaning of the word and miss the next part of the speech. A failure to recognize signals is the fourth problem of listening comprehension. These signals can make the listener confused about what they are hearing. For example, if we are giving directions, we need to use sequencing words to put our information in order by using words like first, second, and third. If the listeners do not know these signals, it will be difficult for them to follow the directions. These signals indicate that the speaker is moving from one phase to another, giving examples, or repeating a point. The listener may notice some markers like “secondly, or then,” or react to the body language, gestures, or changes in the speaker’s intonation. The fifth problem is interpretation. This problem is found with listeners who lack the requisite background knowledge to understand the context of what they are hearing. An example of this is if students, who are unfamiliar with the context of snow, hear the sentence „The snow was so bad that there was nobody in the school.“ This might be difficult for students to interpret correctly if they have never experienced snow. In other words, communication is easier if the listener has some relevant knowledge.

The sixth problem in listening comprehension is the ability to concentrate and the concentration level of the listener. Even the shortest break in attention can lead to students becoming bored. For example, if students are listening to something from a poor and unsuitable machine, it can make listening hard and boring for them. It can be difficult for the listener to concentrate when listening to a foreign language. Learners sometimes feel that listening is very tiring even if they are interested, since it requires a strong effort to follow the meaning. The final problem is established language habits or learning behaviors that the learner has picked up from their teachers. As a teacher wants their students to understand everything they hear, they may repeat and pronounce words slowly and carefully. This can make students

worry if they fail to understand particular word or phrase. For example, if a teacher requires students to listen to something and do an exercise, the students feel that if they do not understand every word they are not confident they can complete the task successfully.

Burton in Abin Syamsuddin Makmun (2007) states that there are some factors influences the students' problem in learning process. The factors are 1) Internal factors are divided into five classes. They are Physical development disorder, mental disorder, emotional disorder, and some unusual learning habits. 2) External factors are the high target on the curriculum, big classes, more extracurricular activities, problem between lecturer and students, unsuitable teaching strategy, and family problem. Teng (2002) in Chao (2013) also stated that the two factors that influence listening comprehension are internal and external factors. The internal factor is the factor which comes from inside the learners. On the other hand, the external factor is the factor which comes from outside of the learners, such as the speaker, stimulus, and context.

In listening class, the students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai learn to understand some texts. The students should be able to respond the meaning in a simple monologue is using a variety of oral language accurately, fluently, acceptable in various contexts of everyday life in spoken text. The purposes are determining the type of text to be heard, finding the function and purpose of the text, identifying specific information in the genres are such as descriptive, narrative, recount, spoof, report, and etc.

Based on the observation, the students are not serious in listening class. It is proved based on the students' attendance which is only 75%. Listening class is not one of the favorite classes for the students at English Study Program of University Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. It is identified by low of the students' creativity in submitting their assignment. It means the students have less exploration; they just collect the assignment without showing good comprehension on their answer on the assignment. It is related with their problem in Listening class.

The students of English Study Program of University Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai still have problem in Listening Comprehension as the subject. It is proved that there are 5 students who cannot reach the passing grade in academic year 2016/2017. In this case, 45% students got "B-".

Based on the data, the students who were failed in the subject explained that the learning process is not maximal with various reasons, either the environment or material in the class. They said that the material is too difficult and some of them are lazy to join this class. Therefore, it is important to find out the problems which cause the bad score and failed students in Listening as the subject.

### **Method**

The method of this research is a descriptive research design; this research is appropriate for this study because it fulfills the characteristics of qualitative research. Creswell (2003:18) says that the qualitative research is the one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on construction perspectives (i.e. the multiple meanings of individual experiences socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing theory or pattern). The qualitative approach was used to describe the characteristic of the data.

### **Finding and Discussion**

#### **a. Internal Factors**

Internal factors are the factors which related to the students as the listeners. The problems come from inside their selves. Based on explanation above, the researchers get the internal factors which influence the students' problem in listening comprehension are the students' self-rating to listening comprehension is not in excellent level. They put their selves in average level. It means they have low confidence in listening comprehension. Then, they also have low perceptions related to other language skills. In this case, they have less effort to get good listening comprehension. They have some strategies to increase their listening comprehension by listening to the lecturer and friends, and using internet and media social as media for communication.

The students also got problem in understanding the content of the listening text. Long spoken text becomes a challenge for the students. They cannot get information in long

spoken text. Then, the students cannot concentrate well in listening process. They lose concentration when listening long spoken text. There are other problems related to listener, such as; feel difficult to get general information, make inference based on the spoken text, difficult to remember words quickly.

**b. External Factors**

External factors are the factors which influence the students' problem in listening comprehension from out of the students their selves. The problems related to the physical setting. The atmosphere around the students influence them in listening comprehension. They feel difficult to concentrate with noises around. In addition, the unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality equipment also make the students feel difficult to have good listening comprehension.

Based on the observation on the teaching and learning process in Listening Comprehension class at the Second Semester of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai in academic year 2017/2018, the researcher got some data which show the teaching and learning process. In this case, the teaching and learning process do not only run in the language laboratory, but most of the teaching and learning process are in the class. The lecturer uses media such as *active speaker* and projector outside the language laboratory. The lecturer used classroom and language laboratory in teaching students. There was a reason for the lecturer to use classroom and language laboratory; to give different atmosphere for the students in teaching learning process. Furthermore, the students can listening the spoken text naturally.

The students are not ready and not active in joining the learning process, because there were some students do not have note book coming to the class. The activeness of the students can be showed in teaching and learning process. There were almost no students gave response and interaction between the students and lecturer. There were only 3 students gave question to the lecturer.

In learning process, the students were not active to give response or answer. They gave various reasons for that. Most of them said that before joining English Study Program, they



did not like English. They also have low English language skill. Then, the lecturer never gives a test before coming to the class. Based on the observation, the researcher got the data which can be seen in the following:

### **1.1 The Competency of Lecturer in Teaching**

Based on the observation sheet, the lecturer taught the students well. There was a lecturer who taught Listening Comprehension. She is a woman. She has English Education background. She is a Master of English Education. The lecturer has various strategies in teaching process in Listening Comprehension Class. Based on the interview, she uses some media such as recording and video as the media of learning. She has good skill in designing the learning activity by using the media. She is also a confident person as the lecturer. She gives time for the students to have discussion inside and outside the class.

The lecturer has various strategies in teaching the listening comprehension by using various media in language laboratory or classroom. Personally, the lecturer shows good knowledge and skill in teaching. She also has good confidence in the class such as; in answering or giving challenge to the students. The lecturer also has good work attitude by coming on time to the classroom.

Based on the observation, the learning activity designed by the lecturer in the class is good. The lecturer uses various media in the class such as; sound system in the laboratory, sound system, media social, recording, and video. In this case, the students are motivated to come to the class and join the listening activity.

### **1.2 The Students' Activity in Listening Class**

Based on the observation, all of the students joined the class. There were 2 students came late in the first meeting. On the next meeting, all of them come on time and join the class. In the learning process, not all of the students paid attention when the lecturer gave explanation. Some students were busy to ask their friends. They looked like confused on the explanation. In the laboratory, they wore headset to listen the recording. Sometimes, they watched video shared by the lecturer. They got opportunity to listen the material more than 1 time. Based on the interview, the lecturer said that it is as the exercise for the students to become accustomed to listening spoken English. When listening and doing the exercise, the

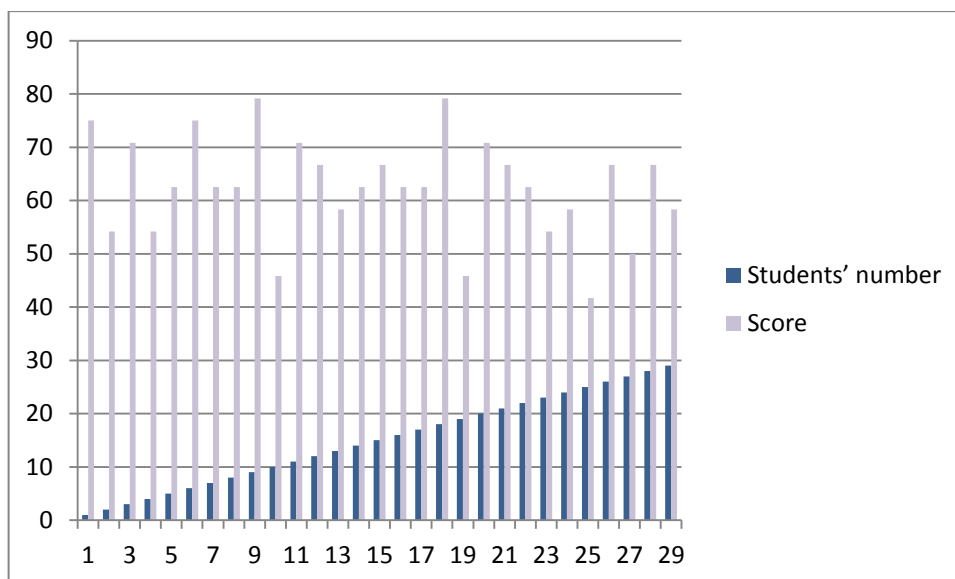
students needed a long time and had discussion with their friends. They were busy to discuss the answer, although the lecturer asked them to do the exercise alone. In this case, there were some students cheating in the class. Based on the data, the result of observation on the students is in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**The Result of Observation on the Students**

Component	Score	Percentage	Category
Paying attention	70	70%	Good
Make note	60	60%	Enough
Giving questions	62	62%	Enough
Active in answering questions	50	50%	Enough
Do the exercise	67	67%	Good

### 1.3 The Students' Listening Comprehension

Test, which was validated instrument by the expert, was be tested to the second semester students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai in academic year 2017/2018. It was done on 25 May 2018. There were 29 students join the test. The students score can be seen in the following graph:



**Graph.1. The Students Score of Listening Comprehension**

Based on the graph above, the average score is 62.5. The highest score is 79 and the lowest score is 41. There are 4 students got score <50, and 7 students got >70. In this case, there is no students got score 80 until 100. The analysis of the students' listening comprehension of each indicator as the following table:

**Table 2**

The Answer of the Students of Each Indicator of Listening Comprehension

No	Items to be Tested	Test Items	Percentage
1.	Finding the general information	1,7,13,19	73.3%
2.	Identifying the setting	2,8,14,20	84.5%
3.	Identifying the problem	3,9,15,21	60.3%
4.	Identifying the resolution in the story	4,10,16,22	46.6%
5.	Making inference	5,11,17,23	28.4%
6.	Finding the meaning of words	6,12,18,24	81.9%

Based on the table above, it is clear that the most difficult indicator of listening comprehension is making inference. On another hand, it is easy for the students to find out the setting of the story and find the meaning of words. In this case, the average score is 62.5. Based on the analysis of the students' listening comprehension above, it can be concluded that the students got problem in listening comprehension. Especially in making inference based on the spoken text they listened to

#### **1.4 The Students' Problem in Listening Comprehension at English Study Program of University Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai**

The researcher analyzed the data which was collected by using questionnaire and interview. The validated instruments are used to find out the problems problem in listening comprehension and factors influenced the students' problem in listening comprehension. The students' problems are in the following explanation:

##### **a. Low Self-Rating to Listening Comprehension**

In questionnaire, the students were asked to have self-rating in listening comprehension. Based on the data, there were 13 students who rate their selves in good level, 13 in average, and 2 in poor. In this case, they think that listening comprehension is an important skill. But most of them stated that listening comprehension is difficult. Therefore, they think that listening activity is not interesting and make them boring. Fewer students are excited in listening comprehension. They often receive sufficient training in English listening comprehension given by the lecturer. In this case, most of the students never have strategy in listening activity. It is clear that the students have no confidence to rate their self in excellent level.

##### **b. The Students' Perceptions Related to Other Language Skills**

Based on the data, the students have their own perception related to other language skill, such as speaking, reading, and writing. For reading skill, there are only 2 confident students who rate their selves in excellent level. There are 15 in good level, 10 in average, 1 in poor level. On another hand, for writing skill there is no confident student to rate their selves in excellent level. There are 5 in good level, 17 in average, 4 in poor level. For

speaking skill, there are 3 students who rate their selves in excellent level, 8 in good level, 14 in average, 4 in poor level. Based on this fact, the students still have low confidence on their language skill.

**c. Using Strategy to Enhance Listening Skills**

This statement is important to see whether the students have strategy to increase their listening skill. Based on the data analysis, there are some strategies that the students have in enhancing listening skill. There are 14 students always listen to the lecturer and classmates use English in the class. Then, there are 20 students use cassettes of CD at home to listen English language study. There are 19 students never use radio channels in studying English. But there are 23 students like to use voice chat on the internet communicating with friends in English. They also use media social as the media for communication by using English.

**d. Students' Statement about the Content of the Listening Text**

Depth information is needed to get the students' problem in listening comprehension. Based on the data, the students have problem in understanding the content of listening text. There are 27 students stated that long spoken text interfere their listening comprehension. All of the students feel difficult to get the information in a long spoken text. Then, they feel fatigue and distracted when listen to a long spoken text. In addition, 14 students feel difficult to understand listening texts with unfamiliar topic. 28 students understand the spoken text by experience and background knowledge of the topic, but it is difficult for them to understand every single word of incoming speech and the listening passage.

**e. The Students' Concentration**

Listening activity needs concentration for the students. Based on the data, the second semester students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai feel that concentration is important in listening comprehension. 27 students lose focus of the talk when getting an expected answer in your head. They cannot concentrate because looking for the answers, and listening to the dialogue at the same time. 28 students stated that they lose concentration when listening long text and thinking the meaning of new words and questions while listening activity. Then, the poor quality recording always disturb their concentration in listening process.

**f. Listening Problems Related to Listener**

Based on the data analysis, there is only 2 students never feel difficult to get general information of the spoken text from the first listening. When listening, 27 students feel difficult to predict what would come next. All of the students feel difficult to remember words or phrases quickly. They feel difficult to recognize the words because of the way of the speaker pronounced. All of them understand some words in writing, but when listening them in a stream of speech, they found it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins. There is only 1 students never feel difficult when listening to English without text and find it difficult to answer information questions/ WH questions.

**g. Listening Problems Related to the Speaker**

There are many people cannot understand the spoken text without looking the speaker. Based on the data, 29 students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai find it difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses. They also find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly. 100% students find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language. They find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak with various accents and speak too fast. All of them feel difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough and without repetition.

**h. Listening problems related to the physical setting**

Physical setting helps the students in listening comprehension. Based on the data, 29 students feel difficult to concentrate with noises around. They feel disturbed by unclear sounds resulting from poor-quality equipment. The atmosphere around the students influence the students in listening comprehension.

**CONCLUSION**

There are 2 factors influence those problems. The factors are internal and external factors. The internal factors are the students have low confidence in listening comprehension. Then, they also have low perceptions related to other language skills. But, they have their own effort to get good

listening comprehension. Then, the students cannot concentrate well in listening process. They cannot concentrate when listening long spoken text. There are other problems related to listener, such as; making inference based on the spoken text. The external factors are the factors which influence the students' problem in listening comprehension from out of the students their selves such as the physical setting and the unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality equipment make the students feel difficult to have good listening comprehension.

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