

**A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION
DIFFICULTIES OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF
MAN 1 JEMBER IN THE 1999/2000 ACADEMIC YEAR**

THESIS

MILIK PERPUSTAKAAN
UNIVERSITAS JEMBER

Presented as one of the requirements to obtain the degree S-1 at
English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty
Jember University

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By

Engkus Kusriah
NIM BIGI 95318

LANGUAGE AND ARTS DEPARTMENT
TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY
JEMBER UNIVERSITY

MOTTO

مَنْ جَدَّ وَجَدَ

IF THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY
(Al mahfudzat/proverb)

DEDICATION

THIS THESIS IS HONORABLY DEDICATED TO:

- ♥ My beloved father, ayahanda Jayadi, *you' ve done a lot of things for my future.*
And my beloved mother, ibunda Robi'ah, *your prayer and affection are so great in reaching my success.*
- ♥ My parents in law, ayahanda Sukardi and ibunda Sumiati, *your advice and guidance teach me how to be a good family*
- ♥ My dearest husband, Drs. Suharto, SH, *may Allah always keep us hand in hand, ...forever.....*
- ♥ All my brothers and sisters, kak Maknun, kak Sobar, Kak Jamaludin, teh Tirah, teh Halimah, *all your sacrifices help me to reach what I hope.*
- ♥ All my best friends, Emy, Pipit, Rosy, Luluk, Tiwi, Santi, Rinda, *dkk No' ve learned and shared many things, thanks for all you' ve given to me.*
- ♥ My almamater, The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, the Jember University.

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By

Name : Engkus Kusriah
NIM : BIGI 95318
Place of Birth : Majalengka
Date of Birth : August 2th, 1974
Department : Language and Arts
Program : English Language

Approved by:

Consultant I,



Dra. Zakiyah Tasnim, MA
NIP. 131 660 789

Consultan II,



Drs. Sugeng Ariyanto, MA
NIP. 131 658 398

APPROVAL

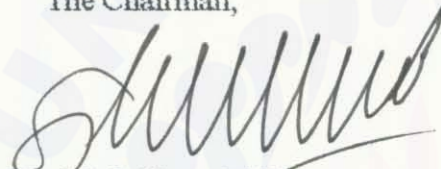
Approved and received by the examination committee of Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Jember University

Day : Friday

Date : 25th February 2000

Place : Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jember University

The Chairman,



Drs M. Sulthon, M.Pd
NIP. 130 937 190

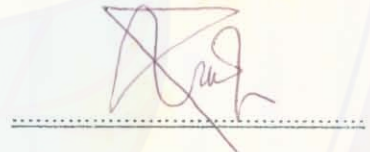
The Secretary,



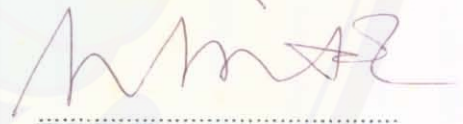
Drs Sugeng Ariyanto, MA
NIP. 131 658 398

The members :

1. Dra. Zakiyah Tasnim, MA
NIP. 131 660 789



2. Dra. Wiwiek Eko, M.Pd.
NIP. 131 475 844



The Dean,



Drs. Soekardjo BW
NIP. 130 287 101

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At last, I do realize that this thesis is far for being perfect, but it is expected to be any uses for either myself or the readers. So for this reason, I wish for useful suggestion and constructive criticism to make this thesis better improved. The blessing of Allah may on them for what they have done. Amin.

Jember, February 2000

The writer

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ABSTRACT

Engkus Kusriah, 1995, **A Descriptive Study on Listening Comprehension Difficulties of the Second Year Students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year.**

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Consultants : (I). Dra. Zakiyah Tasnim, MA
(II). Drs. Sugeng Ariyanto, MA

The key words : **The Difficulties of Listening Comprehension**

The skill of listening comprehension is essential part of communication and as a basis to language learning. Yet, it seems hard to make the students as a fluent listener. They still have some difficulties in interpreting and comprehending the message from the sender given or even never catch any single word spoken. There are three important components in listening comprehension, namely vocabulary, structure and phonetic.

Concerning with the reasons above, it is interesting to conduct research in listening comprehension topic. Therefore, the general research problem was formulated as follows : How far is the difficulties of listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year ? While the specific problems were : 1) How far is the vocabulary difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year ? 2) How far is the structure difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year ? 3) How far is the phonetic difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year ? The research respondents were the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year and proportional random sampling was used to get the sample. In addition, data collecting methods applied were test, interview, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed by using percentage.

The research results showed that the difficulties faced by the second year students of MAN I jember in the 1999/2000 Academic Year was 41,26% or in the difficult category. The detail findings were 28,16% or easy for vocabulary, 42,46% or difficult for structure and 53,16% or difficult for phonetic comprehension. Based on the research result, it is suggested that the English teacher give more portions of exercises in listening comprehension especially in learning phonetic.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

Listening as a receptive skill plays an important role in the mastery of a foreign language. Oller and Conrad in Setyadi Setyapranata (1984:19) remark that "Dikte dan intensive listening merupakan salah satu alat prediksi yang sangat terpercaya untuk mengukur kemampuan bahasa secara integratif." In other words, they suggest that both dictation and intensive listening skills are regarded as a reliable instrument of prediction to measure language ability integrately.

However, in fact, listening class has lower portion than the other skills. There is still little time for practicing listening. Moreover, listening as one of the language skills in SMU has long been neglected. On this point Nababan (1983:154) says "listening as one of the language skills is underemphasized in language teaching." As a result many students may experience difficulties to express and to comprehend others' messages.

Further, listening to foreign language may spend more time than reading and speaking. When speaking, it is the learner himself who selects the target language use. Hence, he can compensate for the deficiencies. When listening, however, he can not control the target language use. This is supported by Davies (1996:112) who notes that "the process of listening and responding to the spoken word is complex and inexperienced, the process of listening comprehension often needs time to assimilate the words, work out the meaning and formulate response." Moreover, Ur (1997:14) says that "One might find number of gaps in listening comprehension. There are some items which he can not understand, he is not familiar with the sound combination, intonation, stress and different accent." This means that, in listening comprehension, one must have the ability to grasp ideas as quickly as possible. He should be able to identify and discriminate between the sound pattern and understand how to pronounce it.

According to Nida (1979: 156) in listening the listener just listens to certain features and concentrate to their mind. The features are phonetic, vocabulary and structure. This suggests that in listening comprehension the students require knowledge about phonetic, vocabulary and structure. Therefore, the students' deficiencies in the three components of listening above may influence the listening comprehension. Here are the following examples that may be faced by the students during the listening comprehension activity. Students are frequently confused with discriminating the consonant sound ("f or v ") so; they may write "knifes" instead of "knives". Besides that, English words are full of silent letters, these letters are never pronounced but they must always be written. For example, the students might write 'our instead of 'hour' because they do not realize that if two words are pronounced the same, they might have different spelling. Even, the students may write nothing because he or she does not recognize the words or he hears unfamiliar vocabulary. In case of structure, they might write "who's book is this?" instead of "whose book is this?" because they do not understand the structure that "whose" means asking for possessive meanwhile "who's" is short for "who is" or "who has".

Based on the explanation above, it is assumed that listening comprehension is not easily learned. This assumption is supported by the research conducted by Yuslaili Ningsih (1998) entitled "A descriptive study on listening comprehension ability of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the academic year of 1997/1998. The research results indicated that the students' mean score was 51.08 on listening comprehension ability. This showed that the MAN I students had a poor ability in listening comprehension. It is predicted that the students found difficulties among the three components of listening, namely, vocabulary, structure, and phonetic.

Therefore, conducting research on listening comprehension is still necessary especially on the students' listening difficulties in SMU. In addition, this research wants to know how far the students' difficulties in listening comprehension in each component, namely vocabulary, structure and phonetic. Furthermore, the most difficult one among the three components of listening comprehension will be investigated as well.

1.2 Problem of The Research

1.2.1. The Problem Formulation

Based on the research background, the research problem is formulated into general and specific problems as follows:

a. General Problem

How far is the listening comprehension difficulties of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year ?

b. Specific Problems

- How far is the vocabulary difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year ?
- How far is the structure difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year ?
- How far is the phonetic difficulties in listening comprehension of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year ?

1.3 Operational Definition of The Variable

1.3.1 Difficulties of Listening Comprehension

In this research, the difficulties of listening comprehension means the difficulties faced by the students in comprehending the spoken utterances as they heard. The difficulties are identified by the error made by the students in listening comprehension test covering vocabulary, structure, and phonetic. The frequency of the errors done by the students here will show us which component becomes the most or the least difficulty in listening comprehension.

1.4 Objective of The Research

Based on the research background and the research problem above the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. General objective:

To describe the listening comprehension difficulties of the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year.

2. Specific objectives:

- To describe the vocabulary difficulties in listening comprehension faced by the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year.
- To describe the structure difficulties in listening comprehension faced by the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year.
- To describe the phonetic difficulties in listening comprehension faced by the second year students of MAN I Jember in the 1999/2000 academic year.

1.5 Significances of The Research.

It is expected that the result of this research will give some input for the English teachers, the students and other researchers.

1.5.1 For The English Teachers

By knowing the description of the listening comprehension difficulties, it will be an important input for the English teachers to know the students' listening comprehension difficulties. In addition, the result of this research can be used as a consideration to improve the English teaching, especially the teaching of listening comprehension in order to minimize the listening comprehension difficulties covering vocabulary, structure, and phonetic for the second year students of MAN I Jember.

1.5.2 For The Students

The results of this research may help the students to know their own weaknesses in the process of listening comprehension. Therefore, they might be motivated to develop their listening comprehension ability.

1.5.3 For The Other Researchers

The result of this research is also expected to give an input for the other researchers to conduct further research especially in the similar topic. For example the correlation study between structure, phonetic or vocabulary and listening comprehension.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents three main parts. They are (1) review of the literature on listening comprehension, (2) the difficulties of listening comprehension consisting of three components namely: vocabulary, structure and phonetic, and (3) listening comprehension material for the second year students of SMU.

2.1 Listening Comprehension

2.1.1 The Nature of listening

Listening is not a passive skill because listening requires an active involvement from the hearer. In order to reconstruct the message that the speaker intends the hearer must actively contribute knowledge from both linguistic and non-linguistic source. Underwood (1989:2) said that listening is always an active process, while hearing can be taught as a passive condition. In addition Rost (1991:3) notes that "listening is primarily a thinking process, thinking about meaning. Effective listeners develop a useful way of thinking about meaning as they listen. Listening is a process of hearing, understanding, and evaluating." This shows that listening is an active process of getting information from the spoken language that requires the listener's willingness and readiness to actively react to what he perceives in order to understand it.

Listening is basically different from hearing. Rubin (1983:14) describes that "people often assume that if person can hear, a person can listen but it is a mistake to identify this two receptive skills as one. We know that listening is more than hearing. A complete view of listening takes place in the complex process of receiving and attending, perceiving assigning meaning, and perhaps responding."

To sum up, someone can hear but might be he or she can not listen yet, because listening means hearing with comprehension. This is not just hearing the words. In addition Tarigan (1994:29) points out that "listening is a process of hearing with comprehension and appreciation and hearing is a process to receive sound which is not followed by comprehension and appreciation." This means that hearing is a process to receive sound only and listening is a process of hearing oral symbol with

full attention, comprehension, appreciation and interpretation information and meaning from what is heard.

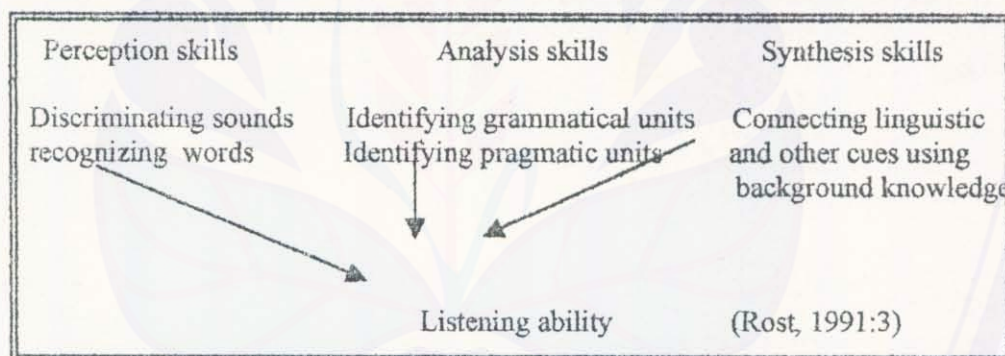
2.1.2 The Importance of Listening Comprehension in Language Learning

Listening skill is needed to master a foreign language. According to Ross (1982:xi) states that:

“If one is to be proficient in the use of a foreign language, one must have the ability to grasp ideas as quickly as they hear, by making rapid association between the utterances and the meaning they represent. To comprehend quickly, the listener must identify and discriminate between the sound patterns and understanding the meaning associated with the grammatical structure.”

In short, listening is extremely important to develop in language learning. If someone wants to comprehend the relevant message from what he or she listens, means he or she should also learn phonetic, vocabulary and structure as well.

As in writing and speaking, listening has its own skills, which must be mastered. Rost (1991:3) states that the skills in listening are as follows:



As can be seen from the table that successful listening involves an integration of some skills, they are the perception skills, analysis skills and synthesis skills.

Listening activity is very important for both teachers and learners. Because if the students are able to listen well, it can make the teaching learning process more effective. Rost (1991:5-7) writes the strengths of listening in three as follows:

- First, listening is an active process. Therefore, the students must employ active thinking as they listen by developing ‘an active attitude’ about understanding and ‘active strategies’ for making sense of what they hear.

- Second, listening plays an active part in language learning. Listening is involved in many language activities, both inside and outside the language classroom. Progress in listening will provide a basis for the development of other language skills. Therefore, the teachers can assist their students in their overall language development.
- Third, in listening activity the teacher as an active 'researcher' of listening development. The teachers should be active not just in planning and preparing activities for their students, but in giving useful feedback to them and exploring with them how their skill is changing and improving.

From the explanation above, it can be said that listening comprehension plays very important role in language learning. Because listening comprehension covers many others language skills. To be a good listener one should also master vocabulary, structure and phonetic as well. Furthermore it also gives a good effect in English teaching learning process entirely.

2.1.3 Some Factors Influencing Listening Comprehension.

In relation to the factors influencing the process of listening activities Tarigan (1994:98) clarifies them into (1) physical factors, (2) psychological factors, (3) experience, (4) attitude, (5) motivation, (6) sex, (7) environment, and (8) role in society. Meanwhile Goh (1997:365) in *ELT Journal* describes the factors which affect listening comprehension, are:

- a. Phonological modifications e.g. stress
- b. Unfamiliar vocabulary
- c. Different varieties and local accents
- d. Speech rate
- e. Types of input (e.g. natural speech, conversation, news broadcast)
- f. Good and bad times for listening
- g. Interest in topic and purpose of listening
- h. Existing knowledge and experience
- i. Physical factors (e.g. noise, fatigue)
- j. Emotional states (e.g. pressure, nervousness, anxiety)
- k. Length and structure of sentence

From the explanation above it can be summarized that Tarigan (1994:98) defines factors influencing listening comprehension based on the non-linguistic aspect only. However, Goh (1997:365) clarifies that both linguistic and non-linguistic factors influence listening comprehension.

Based on the description above, it can be said that the listening comprehension in this research focuses on investigating the linguistic aspect only.

2.2 The Difficulties of Listening Comprehension

Many students are sometimes able to read, write, even speak as well, but they find problems to listen in English. This problem is based on the idea that listening comprehension has its peculiar problems which arise from the complicated ways we process what we hear (Rivers, 1987:151). In addition, Underwood (1989:9) notes that "special features of spoken English such as sound, stress and intonation, the organization of speech, syntax and vocabulary, pauses and fillers, and formal/informal language might have effect the students who are learning to listen." This means that listening is a complicated process which is not fully understood. Therefore, the students may experience difficulties in listening comprehension because it covers many components, namely pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary.

Further Harmer (1985:175-177) explains that

"listening as a skill may be extremely similar to reading, but the text that the listener has to deal with is considerably different from the written one. Most obviously a listener cannot look at what he is trying to hear, he can only listen to it. Whereas the written word stay on the page and can be looked at more than once, however, the spoken word, unless recorded on tape or record cannot be repeated."

This means that listening is more difficult than reading. In listening, the listener should comprehend what the speaker said as quickly as they heard. While in reading, the reader can read more than once to what the writer means in the passage.

Meanwhile, according to John and Waler (1970:198) say that

"listening situation differs from reading situation. A reader can retrace his steps at will; he can vary the speed of apprehension with the difficulty of the material; he can stop to reflect over a line or phrase, or he can skim and skip and race along the lines that are familiar or uninteresting. Meanwhile in listening comprehension, the listener is completely dependent upon the tempo of the speaker and upon the enunciation and the modulations of his voice."

From the above explanation shows that listening is difficult to learn. Listening is not easy as reading skill. It is impossible for the listener to neglect a part of what he or she hears, however; he or she should concentrate with full attention to all parts such as the voice, the intonation, vocabulary and the pronunciation.

Learning to listen effectively in another language is a real problem for many students. Students sometimes fail to grasp the information from the spoken utterances because they might not master the components of listening comprehension. Fox (1994:42) believes that "listening is very difficult to learn. In listening, the learner can not control the structure and lexical range of the speaker." In addition Robinet (1978:178) says "what are the characteristics of English that the listener must become familiar with in order to get the meaning of what he heard, obviously, they involves the sounds, structure, and the vocabulary of English." At last to be a good listener, one should master the component of listening skills, namely phonetic, structure and vocabulary.

It is realized that comprehension to the spoken language is one of the most difficult task. Goh (1997:363) clarifies that there are some problems during listening. They are :

- a. taking notes
- b. can not distinguish important points
- c. slow to recall meaning of word that sound familiar
- d. do not recognize sound of word which they know in writing
- e. understand individual words, but do not get overall meaning
- f. miss the rest of the text when there is a lapse in concentration
- g. miss the next part when thinking about words on interpretation
- h. can not remember words/phrases they have just heard
- i. can not divide streams of speech into words or parts of sentence
- j. mistake one word for another similar-sounding one

Furthermore, he also mentions the obstacles to listening comprehension as follow:

- a. limited vocabulary or academic terms
- b. phonological modification e.g. stress;
- c. particular types of accent
- d. idiomatic expression
- e. types of input with an unfamiliar structure
- f. inefficient memory
- g. fast speech

From the explanation above, it can be generalized that the problems and the obstacles of listening comprehension involve four components, namely vocabulary, phonetic, structure, and inefficient memory. However in order to make this study clear, the writer just focuses on reviewing vocabulary, structure and phonetic. The following section discusses those three components.

2.2.1. The Difficulties of Vocabulary in Listening Comprehension

Listening and vocabulary are related to each other. Poor the vocabulary causes the failure in listening comprehension. Verdeber (1970:22) reveals that "many poor students who have average or better intelligence may be handicapped by a poor vocabulary. If he is a bellow-average vocabulary, he may have to work much harder on listening comprehension." In addition Marcus (1977:84) states that "if listener can not follows the instruction, his problem is not exclusively a listening problem. He may have vocabulary or retention problem. "From those explanation can be said that if someone understand all words that a person uses, he will retain more. However, if someone does not understand words used in conversation or he is not familiar with the specialized vocabulary used in particularly field of study, his listening may well be affected.

The knowledge of vocabulary is greatly needed to understand the spoken language. No one can understand what a speaker is saying unless he knows what the speaker is producing in his utterances. In listening vocabulary, Nida (1979:23) says that "in listening the students can listen to words and phrases that they have already learned. They can also discover expression that they have not learned but which recur in the text." This means that in listening, the student can listen for familiar and unfamiliar words and phrases.

Vocabulary as a component of listening skill, might be a problem for students. It often happens in listening, that the student finds himself or herself unable to comprehend spoken language. Vocabulary may make the students easy to understand the meaning of conversation. However, it can also make them confuse since a certain word will have a different meaning in different context. They may confused when they should put the words "way, street or road" in a certain sentence, and also they may confused in making derivatives forms, such as "advise" become "advice." Nida (1979:111) states " vocabulary, which is listened to always comes in structure context." For example, the students may write, "I have three book" instead of "I have three books."

Students may experience difficulties in comprehending the spoken language because listening to a foreign language and unfamiliar word can be like a barrier causing them to stop and think about the meaning of word and thus making them