

THE IMPORTANCE AND DIFFICULTIES OF LISTENING SKILL: A DESCRIPTION

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ABSTRACT

This article is a general description about the importance of listening skill and the difficulties that students may face in understanding listening skill. Thus, it is hoped that teachers can be more aware of listening skill which is as important as other language skills in learning and mastering foreign languages, especially English..

Keywords: listening, importance, difficulties

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini merupakan deskripsi umum tentang pentingnya listening skill dan kesulitan yang mungkin dihadapi oleh siswa dalam memahami listening skill. Dengan demikian, diharapkan bahwa guru dapat lebih menyadari bahwa listening skill sama pentingnya dengan keterampilan bahasa lainnya dalam pembelajaran dan penguasaan bahasa asing khususnya Bahasa Inggris..

Kata kunci : *mendengar, penting, kesulitan*

A. Introduction

Listening is one of the most important language skills to master because it is involved in every activity we do in our daily lives. Without learning listening first, other language skills and development might not be able to work well (Suri, Zulkarnain, and Rahmawati, 2022). While according to Lakmali (2022) listening is more of a mental process in which the goal is to make the other person feel comfortable rather than judged or criticized. Therefore, it can be understood that listening skill is important to master first in order to master other language skills and it shall need the use of all five senses in order to comprehend what the speaker is attempting to convey.

Listening is a fundamental skill that everyone possesses when communicating. Listening to other people's words is a method of receiving language that requires the ability to store various types of information and is related to thought processes. Children begin by listening and then begin to speak; they speak first, then read, and finally write after reading; that is why listening is the first language skill to appear among all others (Lundsteen, 1979 as cited in Yildirim and Yildirim (2016). Listening is the first skill that humans acquire and master in order to determine the development of a person's first language. Listening is used two times more than speaking, four times more than reading, and five times more than writing. Thus, it can be

said that listening skills are more commonly used than any other skill.

Then, is it easy or difficult to master listening skill? How to make listening comprehension easier to master? How teach listening skill to students? How to get students interested in listening skill? What approach should the teachers use during teaching learning at school? How to improve students' listening skill?

Before answering those questions, it should be understood first the importance of listening skill and the difficulties of listening skill along the learning process faced by the students.

B. Discussion

Types of Listening

According to Brown as cited in Nuraini (2019) there are four types of listening, namely 1) intensive listening, 2) responsive listening, 3) selective listening, and 4) extensive listening. While quoting from Eatough (2022) there are seven types of listening skills which can be developed, namely 1) informational listening, 2) discriminative listening, 3) biased listening, 4) sympathetic listening, 5) comprehensive listening, 6) empathetic or therapeutic listening, and 7) critical listening. Moreover, Spacey (2021) write twelve common types of listening skills as 1) active listening, 2) reflective listening, 3) critical listening, 4) emphatic listening, 5) communicative listening, 6) active non-listening, 7) filtering, 8) minimization, 9) targeting, 10) cognitive multitasking, 11) appreciative listening, and 12) comprehension.

Quoting from Franz (2021) there are four types of listening styles as identified by scholars, namely 1) people oriented listening, 2) action oriented listening, 3) content oriented listening, and 4) time oriented listening. She also adds other types of listening based on the difference of people when receiving and responding to messages such as 1) pseudo listening, 2) appreciative listening, 3) empathetic listening, 4) comprehensive listening, and 5) critical listening.

Whatever the types, listening skill is the main component of effective

communication skills. Listening is essential for understanding what others are saying. It's easy to get something wrong and make assumptions when you're not listening.

Importance of Listening Skill

According to Eatough (2022) listening is importance for the following reasons: it is the key component of effective communication, it is the most important part in communication, it is important for productive collaboration, and it is crucial when someone to learn effectively. While M. Karimova, et al. (2020) write that listening is important because it occupies a big chunk of the time we spend communicating in the language, provides input that can be very significant for second language acquisition in general and for the development of the speaking skill in particular, and promotes non-linear processing of language and encourages learners to develop "holistic" strategies to texts. In addition, Nabiyeu and Idiyev (2022) write as well that listening is important in learning English because listening has an important place in learning as it is one of the four major skills in language acquisition, awakens awareness of the language as it is a receptive skill that first develops in a human being, improves language ability (substantial and meaningful response) when learning to listen to the target language, plays a vital role particularly when learning a language for communicative purpose since listening can help the learner to acquire pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax and the comprehension of messages conveyed can be based solely on tone of voice, pitch and accent.

Therefore it can be said that all components of communication can be comprehended well if listening skill is mastered. Learning cannot improve unless appropriate understanding input is provided. Furthermore, communication is impossible without the ability to listen.

Every study on the acquisition of language skills has shown that when we communicate, that when we communicate, we gain 45% of language competence from listening, 30% from speaking, 15% from

reading and 10% from writing (Nabiyev and Idiyev, 2022). From this data, therefore, it can be said that listening is a language forerunner because it has the highest percentage of involvement in the exchange of information in effective communication.

Difficulties of Learning Listening Skill

Studies conducted on listening in the field of second and foreign language learning revealed that listening is one of the most difficult skills for language learners (Goh, 2000; Guo & Wills, 2006) as cited in Yildirim and Yildirim (2016).

Nabiyev and Idiyev (2022) identified the main reasons of listening difficulties as follows:

1. Lack of effort to understand each and every word while listening. Especially in L2 acquisition they are unable transfer their L1 skill easily to a second language.
2. Failure or laziness to build up their vocabulary gradually and this greatly reflects in their listening and keeps them low spirited in acquiring the language skills.
3. Listeners problem with different pronunciation, accents as they stick to one particular articulation.

While Diora and Rosa (2020), concluded from their research the most difficulties of listening faced by students while learning listening by categorizing the difficulties into two. First relates to the listening material, second relates to the students as the listener themselves, and third relates to speaker and physical setting. The first category identified the difficulties such as the complex grammatical structure, the difficulty to understand every single words of incoming speech, difficult to inter the meaning of long spoken text, and unfamiliar topic. Meanwhile, the second category identified the difficulties such as anxiety, difficult to infer the meaning of unknown words, unable to concentrate, unclear pronunciation, and hard to remember. Moreover, the third category found out the difficulties such as poor quality of tapes or disks greatly affects

students in listening to the audio, poor equipment, lack of pauses, inability to get repeated, noises, variety of accents, and speed of delivery.

In addition, Yildirim and Yildirim (2016) drew the following table to identify the problems encountered by English language learners in listening.

Table 2 Problems Related to Different Phases of Listening Comprehension

Perception	Do not recognize words they know. Neglect the next part when thinking about meaning. Cannot chunk streams of speech. Miss the beginning of texts. Concentrate too hard or unable to concentrate.
Parsing	Quickly forget what is heard. Unable to form a mental representation from words heard. Do not understand subsequent arts input because of earlier problems.
Utilization	Understand words but not the intended messages. Confused about the key ideas in the messages.

Understanding from the elaboration above, it can be seen that the main problem in listening is that there are unfamiliar sounds that appear in English but not in their native language, causing comprehension difficulties. Other than that, learners also need to comprehend the meaning of the spoken words which needs effort if the speakers are native. Learners also particularly have difficulty to understand unfamiliar idioms, proverbs and collocations as well as various features of spoken language. Moreover, different accent also can become problem since learners of English as foreign language are used to hearing their teachers speaking English.

However, English is spoken all over the world for communication, and they should be given opportunities to become

acquainted with different accents, which may help them overcome this problem.

C. Conclusion

The ability to listen is critical for effective collaboration. Listening skills can lead to improved communication in both personal and professional settings. Listening abilities are required in school, at home, at work, and in public.

Teachers should work on their listening skills so that they can interact with students, peers, parents, and administrators more effectively. Similarly, students must be able to focus on what others are saying rather than being self-absorbed and only concerned with them. Assisting students in enhancing listening skills can help them to concentrate on increasing their attention span.

Educators can help students remember more of what they hear by encouraging them to pay attention with techniques such as using humor and interesting facts; for example, during a history lesson, you could share a little-known fact about the subject; using engaging examples by providing anecdotes that show how a concept is used in real life helps students learn and understand concepts better; and assigning individual or group projects that require research helps reinforce concepts.

To keep students engaged and interested in the material being taught; use a variety of teaching styles, activities, and exercises.

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