

***DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING LITERAL LISTENING OF THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH TADRIS STUDY PROGRAM AT STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF DATOKARAMA PALU***

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**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif untuk mengetahui kesulitan dalam belajar literal listening pada mahasiswa semester dua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu. Wawancara terstruktur dilakukan untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian, “Apa kesulitan dalam belajar literal listening pada mahasiswa semester dua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu?” Respondennya adalah tujuh belas mahasiswa semester dua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu. Melalui wawancara, peneliti menemukan beberapa kesulitan yang dihadapi responden dalam belajar literal listening. Kesulitan yang dihadapi adalah kurangnya kosa kata untuk memahami kata-kata dalam materi literal listening serta memahami detailnya, membedakan pasangan kata minimal pairs dalam materi, tidak terbiasa dengan kemunculan juncture, tidak mampu beradaptasi dengan kecepatan berbicara penutur asli, tidak memahami berbagai macam aksen, dan kesulitan untuk fokus pada materi

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan, *Literal Listening*

**ABSTRACT**

*This research applied a qualitative approach to investigate the difficulties in learning literal listening of the second semester students of English Tadris Study Program at State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu. A structured interview was conducted to answer the research question, “What are the difficulties of learning literal listening of the second semester students of English Tadris Study Program at State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu?” The respondents were seventeen second semester students of English Tadris Study Program of State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu. Through the interview, the researcher discovered several difficulties that the respondents encountered in learning literal listening. The difficulties are the lack of vocabulary to understand words in the materials of listening as well as to understand the details, differentiating minimal pairs in the materials, not being accustomed to the appearance of juncture, not being able to adapt to the speed of speaking of native speakers, not understanding various accents, and the difficulty to focus on the materials*

*Keywords: Difficulty, Literal Listening*

## INTRODUCTION

EFL students often find English as a challenging target language. In some countries where English is learned as a foreign language, the students learn English based on two motivations. Broughton et.al. (2003: 5) explain that when the EFL learners learn English to be able to read English literature or to be able to communicate, then they have instrumental motivation. In the other hand, when they learn English in order to identify the speech community, then they are called to have integrative motivation.

In Indonesia, listening is taught as integrated skill along with reading, speaking, and writing. English textbooks in high schools do not include specifically the material of listening. Students have limited skill in listening due to the absence of listening material in high school English textbooks. Some students improve their listening skill by learning by themselves, for example by listening to English songs, watching movies, or playing games.

However, TOEFL is still accepted as a legal English proficiency test when someone intends to graduate from a university or to register a job. One of the parts being tested in TOEFL is listening comprehension. This is inversely proportional with the reality that the curriculum of English in high school emphasizes on reading and writing skill. Students are expected to understand kinds of reading texts and to be able to construct grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, some students still have difficulty in listening comprehension. Listening comprehension is often seen as an exclusive part in learning English.

Listening skill is one of receptive skills besides reading skill. Broughton et.al. (2003: 66) further clarify that listening can be harder than reading. Unlike reading, listening is rarely taught. Moreover, learning listening is not as simple as learning reading. Someone will simply reread what he wants, but cannot rehear what he already hears.

There are several researchers having conducted researches on the difficulty of listening. The first is the research by Sofyan and Mushriah (2019) who discussed the difficulties in listening comprehension. The

research instrument is pre-TOEFL test and questionnaire. The result of the research shows that the students' difficulties can be observed on their low scores in listening section, limited vocabulary to interpret the lecture, understanding accents, and getting accustomed to the speed of speech.

In Vietnam, students of EFL faced problem in listening comprehension. A case study conducted by Tran and Duong (2020) researched high school students in Ho Chi Minh City. The result of the research found out that the listening problems are perception, parsing, and utilization. Furthermore, the respondents also had phonological, syntactical, semantical and discoursal difficulties.

Another research concerning listening comprehension problem was conducted by Diora and Rosa (2020). The focus of the research is on observing the difficulties of the students on listening comprehension and the factors causing the difficulties. The result of the research shows that the problem is on the material, the listener, and the physical setting. The factors causing the difficulties are divided into two – intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factor arises from their shame to ask about the material in the lecture and having emotional disturbance, while the extrinsic factor comes from the speed of the lecturer's explanation of the material, difficulty to concentrate on the lecture, and the lack of reinforcement.

Harmer (2013: 303) states that listening skill can be improved by combining intensive listening and extensive listening material. While intensive listening can be learned in classroom, extensive listening can be done outside the classroom. When students use extensive listening material – the material that they decide by themselves based on what they want to listen – to study outside the classroom, their listening skill enhances significantly.

Literal listening is the first and the very basic level of listening other than inferential and analytical listening. This class provides second semester students with the experience to comprehend daily conversation and simple monologue passages with the ability to listen word by word clearly. Some of the students find out

the material is easy for them, while the others conclude that they have internal difficulties about getting the context as well as catching the words uttered in the passages or conversations. While some of them can successfully adapt with the learning circumstances as well as the difficulty level of the material in every meeting, the others are stuck with their difficulty to hear every single word.

Realizing the phenomena above, the researcher then decided to conduct this research to answer the question, “What are the difficulties of learning literal listening of the second semester students of English Tadris Study Program at State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu?”

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher decides to apply a qualitative approach in conducting this research to answer the research question stated above. Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert that qualitative research is an approach to explore individual or social phenomena concerned by emerging questions to participants and making interpretation to the result of inquiring process. Creswell in another book (2007: 37) explains that one of the characteristics of a qualitative research is the product of the research comes from the participants' voices, review and interpretation by the researcher to the concerned inquiry, and the result is intended to call for awareness and an action to solve the problem.

To answer the research question, the researcher conducted a structured interview consisting of five questions to seventeen second semester students of English Tadris Study Program of State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu. The interview was administered in two cycles due to the number of the participants and the available time they dedicate.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The technique of data collection is structured interview consisting of five questions to seventeen second semester students in literal listening class. The questions in this structured interview were designed to further obtain information

related to the educational institution level they started learning English, their individual strategies to adapt with the material of literal listening, the difficulties they encountered when learning literal listening, the potential solution they choose to carry out regarding the difficulties, and their point of view and suggestion to improve the quality of teaching and learning in literal listening class.

Based on the result of the interview, the researcher discovered the fact that some of the respondents started learning English in elementary school, while the others in junior high school. The experience of learning English in early childhood and teenage bring them to the phenomena of learning English for fun. They have personal point of view to enjoy learning English. This fact cannot be separated from the reality that the respondents are the students of English major whose interest are in English.

To the researcher, the respondents shared their strategies in learning literal listening. Literal listening class is the very basic level of listening skill. They will have to face two more levels – inferential and analytical – of listening class. However, what they shared here was not related to their strategies to get involved with the material of intensive listening in the classroom, but on the way how they improve their skill of listening outside the classroom by using extensive listening material. Many of them learned listening through social media platform such as Instagram, YouTube, Podcast, and Vlog. Some of the respondents preferred to watch English movies and listen to English songs with subtitles. There were also some of them who decided to enjoy watching animation such as Disney or playing online games, while the others tended to listen to English conversation or passages in the form of authentic material.

The respondents described the difficulties they encountered in learning literal listening. Most of the respondents agreed that limited vocabulary stock has become one of the obstacles in comprehending literal listening material. Due to the lack of vocabulary items, they found it hard to understand some words they

listened in the material. Some of the words they heard were unknown, and they first heard the words at the moment of listening to the material. Besides, they faced some phonological phenomena that led them to the confusion such as minimal pairs and juncture, for example what they heard is the word “ball”, but they were confused to decide whether they heard the word “ball” or “bowl”. Especially in the case of juncture, native English speakers will not wait even one second to utter the second word after the previous one, for example when the respondents heard the word /pɒdɪt/, they needed to know that actually it consists of the word “put” and “it”. Demirezen (2019) describes that juncture is the pause and continuation in utterances regarding the speed of speaking.

Another difficulty the respondents encountered in learning literal listening was understanding the details. They found it quite easy to guess the context. However, working with the details is not that easy, especially when vocabulary item is limited. They also had to be accustomed to the natural speed of native speakers. The other difficulty was to focus on the material. Some of the respondents claimed that they could lose their focus even when they were still listening to the material. Therefore, staying focused was one of the difficulties they experienced. The last but not least, the difficulty can appear when the lecturer provided them with materials using different accent from what they usually listened to.

After inquiring the respondents about the difficulties they encountered in learning literal listening, the researcher also investigated the potential solution they committed to minimize the difficulty impact to the learning process. Most of them indicated that enriching vocabulary was crucial to conduct. They preferred to read authentic materials to enhance the vocabulary as well as to improve their insight related to certain topics of material. Continuing listening to any kind of English materials having different levels of difficulty also became their choice. Some of them used online platform to listen and practice pronunciation of English words.

Some respondents suggested that the class circumstances should be designed as comfortable as possible to support learning process. The lecturer can provide students with various authentic materials from online platform. Sometimes songs and videos can also be the best materials to bring in the classroom. To enhance listening skill, speaking skill as well as vocabulary, shadowing technique can be performed

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

After having interviewed seventeen respondents, the researcher discovers several difficulties in learning literal listening of the second semester students of English Tadris Study Program of State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu. The main problem is the lack of vocabulary. Limited vocabulary stock can emerge another problem such as the difficulty to understand every word in the material and the details of the material. Some phonological problems also appear such as to differentiate minimal pairs, to understand juncture phenomena, and to get accustomed to various English accents. The respondents also had to adapt with the normal speed of native speakers. Losing focus is also one of the difficulties encountered by the respondents.

Learning literal listening in classroom has become a new experience of the respondents who study English as the major. The skill of listening can improve if students continuously listen to English materials at different difficulty level. Authentic material can be the best choice to get used to natural speed of native speakers. With the good combination of intensive listening in the classroom and extensive listening outside the classroom, learners can achieve their goal in listening skill, that is to understand many kinds of listening material at various levels of difficulty. The lecturer should motivate the students to keep listening English outside the classroom by recommend them some online platform that can lead them to achieve their goal in listening.

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