



AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING LISTENING SKILL (A Study at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh)

Puja Nurjannah^{*1}, Sariakin², Regina Rahmi³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the difficulties faced by students in learning listening skills at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. Listening skills are often considered as one of the most challenging skills in learning English, especially for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. Through a quantitative descriptive approach, data were collected using a questionnaire distributed to 36 grade XI students of SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. The results showed that the main difficulties experienced by students included cultural and accent differences, poor recording quality, and sentence complexity and vocabulary limitations. In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety also influenced students' understanding. The average percentage for the "often" category reached 45.3% and "always" 30.2%, indicating that many students experienced challenges in understanding listening skills. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that teachers increase the use of authentic materials, accent variations, and implement effective listening strategies to help students overcome obstacles in understanding listening skills

Keywords: Listening Skills, Listening Difficulties, English Language Learning, Accent

PENDAHULUAN

Teacher is one of many factors influence the successful of teaching learning process. Teachers or lecturers play the most important role in teaching learning process; they can lead meaningful English learning classroom activities if they are able to overcome or minimize the problem faced by their students. Especially in the English language teaching, teachers' main duty is to direct their students in mastering the macro language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Listening skills are one of the language skills that students often consider the most challenging. One of the main reasons is that these skills require processing information in real time. According to Rost (2011), "Listening involves an active process of decoding and interpreting oral input" which means that listeners must capture, understand and interpret information directly without the opportunity to repeat or recheck as in reading

* nobar2829@gmail.com

skills. In addition, in listening situations, there are often distractions or noise that can interfere with concentration and understanding. Brown and Yule (1983) added that "the listener has to cope with the speaker's accent, speed of delivery, and intonation patterns," which can make comprehension difficult for unfamiliar listeners. Compared to speaking, reading and writing skills which allow students to think before responding or producing language, listening skills require quick and precise comprehension, so they often require more intensive and specific practice to be mastered effectively.

According to Nguyen (2020), listening comprehension is a complex process in which listeners play an active role in discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation and stress, and finally, making use of all the skills mentioned above, interpreting the utterance within the socio-cultural context. Listening skills are anything but easy to master. For many EFL learners, listening is the thing they feel most frustrated with. On the one hand, they cannot control the speed of speech and they tend to have difficulties decoding sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue. Reduced English sounds (lazy speech) or contractions are two examples. On the other hand, even when they hear sounds correctly, usually they have interpretation problems due to a lack of vocabulary. English slang or colloquial language increases the difficulty of interpretation. For EFL learners in Banda Aceh, there is another problem. Since listening does not receive as much attention as reading and writing, students always recognize a word by sight instead of by sound. They may have no interpretation problem when they look at the target word; however, when they are asked to decipher the word through sound, problems emerge.

Listening has been defined by many researchers. Nguyen (2020) defined listening as the ability to understand native speech at normal speed. Rintaningrum (2020) said listening involves auditory discrimination, aural grammar, selecting necessary information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning. According to Ghafar dkk (2023), listening differs in meaning from sound discrimination to aural comprehension. Defined listening as a process of understanding what is heard and organizing it into lexical elements to which meaning can be allocated.

Sariakin et al. (2023) emphasize that listening is an external process that requires the listener to actively participate. The ability to comprehend speech at a normal pace is a critical goal for language learners, and developing listening skills is essential for achieving this.

The term “listening comprehension” has been defined by different authors. According to Saraswaty (2018) listening comprehension means that a person understands what he/she has heard. If he/she learns the text through hearing it, he/she will understand it. Vu & Tham (2023) defined listening comprehension as the product of teaching methodology and is matched by terms such as speech understanding, spoken language understanding, speech recognition, and speech perception.

EFL refers to the study and use of English by non-native speakers in a context where English is not the primary language of daily communication. At SMKN 1 Banda Aceh, English is taught as a compulsory subject, and students are expected to develop competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This research focuses on listening skills within the EFL context, addressing the specific challenges students face when listening to English in both academic and non-academic settings.

SMKN 1 Banda Aceh a public high school located in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This school is selected as the research site due to its representative characteristics of students learning English as a foreign language. In this research context, SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is where data collection takes place, including classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, and the administration of listening tests.

The writer is desired to conduct a listening-related research after directly observed teaching learning process in SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. She found that ineffective teaching-learning process occurred in which only a small portion of listening parts were taught to students. The teachers mostly teach the other skills excluding listening. They said that listening is the most difficult part for students in learning english. The writer is desired to conduct a listening-related research after directly observing the teaching-learning process in SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. She found that an ineffective teaching-learning process occurred in which only a small portion of listening parts were taught to students. The teachers mostly teach the other skills excluding listening. They said that listening is the most difficult part for students in learning English." This observation is supported by research that highlights the challenges of teaching listening skills in the classroom. Field (2008) notes that listening is often neglected in language classrooms because it is perceived as a passive skill, and teachers may not feel confident in teaching it effectively. Furthermore, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) emphasize that "listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know," making it a challenging skill to develop without targeted and consistent practice. Studies also show that many students struggle with listening comprehension due to factors such

as different accents, speech rates, and lack of contextual cues (Goh, 2000). These findings align with the writer's observations, indicating a broader issue in the teaching and learning of listening skills.

SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is one of high schools that has those problem mentioned. This school will be the research place based on the considerations that it has problem in teaching listening and it has easy access for the writer to get research permit. Another consideration is the school is located in Banda Aceh which is considered as developed area of Banda Aceh city. Most of schools in Banda Aceh have better facilities than schools in rural areas. However, this high school has the small portion of teaching listening.

In spite of its importance, listening has long been neglected skill in foreign language acquisition, research, teaching and assessment. There has been few researches on the listening problems that foreign language learners experience in learning to listen to a spoken English in the classrooms. The result of a research entitled *An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Problems Encountered by Students in the EL Listening Classroom* shown that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL learners (Hamouda, 2013).

Similarly, Ahsaniah (2012) conducted the research at MAN Negara in Bali. Her result of research reported that the students were lack of vocabulary, so they had difficulty to understand the recording in listening section. The result of the research shown that students' difficulties in learning listening at the eleventh grade of MAN academic year 2011/2012 are the students had difficulty to discriminate voiced and voiceless and minimal pair sounds in phoneme discrimination test, they were also lack of vocabulary. Thus, they had difficulty to understand short dialogue by answering multiple choice items. The students did not understand the grammar that used in the text and they had common mistakes in spelling in filling in the blank question.

The difficulties faced by students in learning listening skills at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh are significant and warrant further investigation. During the direct observation of the teaching-learning process, it was evident that listening activities were minimal and often overshadowed by other language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking. This imbalance is a concern because listening is a foundational skill that supports the development of the other language skills. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), "listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they

hear with what they already know," making it essential for overall language proficiency. Furthermore, the challenges faced by students, such as difficulty understanding different accents, varying speech rates, and limited exposure to authentic listening materials, align with findings by Goh (2000), who identified similar obstacles in listening comprehension. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that many teachers feel less confident in teaching listening compared to other skills, as noted by Field (2008). Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the effectiveness of the English language learning process at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh and ensuring that students develop a balanced set of language skills.

From this reality, the writer assumed that it is urgent to investigate the reasons of listening being the most difficult part for students in order to find out its solution. Therefore, a research under the title "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Learning Listening (A Study at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh)" will be conducted. The writer aims to examine the difficulties faced by students in learning listening. The writer used descriptive-qualitative research, conducted an interview to obtain significant information regarding this research process

METODE PENELITIAN

The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative. Descriptive research is research that aims to describes something that was going on when the research was conducted and examine the causes of a particular symptom (Abdullah, 2015). The quantitative descriptive method is used because this method is carried out with The main goal is to create an image or describe a situation objectively (Prasko et al., 2016).

Quantitative research uses more internal numbers research and analysis process using statistics (Sugiyono, 2019). Therefore, in this research, researcher us research descriptive with survey methods and quantitative approaches.

Place And Time Research

This research was conducted at class XI students of SMKN 1 Banda Aceh which is located on Jalan Sultan Malikul Saleh Lhong Raya Kec. Banda Raya, Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia. This research was carried out in July 2024 until completion.

Research Subject

According to Sugiyono (2019) population is a generalized area consisting of objects/subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied and then conclusions drawn. According to Sugiyono (2019) the sample is

part of the number and characteristics of the population. The sampling technique in this research uses sampling using a census/total sampling technique. In accordance with what was stated by Sugiyono (2019), census is a sampling technique where all members of the population are sampled. Therefore, the samples taken in this research were 70 class XI students of SMKN 1 Banda Aceh.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in this research is a closed questionnaire utilizing an interval measurement scale with a Likert scale model. A closed questionnaire, as defined by Sudjana (2005), is one that presents respondents with predetermined alternative answer choices, requiring them to place a cross (X) or checkmark (√) on the answer they deem appropriate. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the interval measurement scale is extensively employed to measure social phenomena or symptoms, where respondents are asked to rank certain preferences and assign a value (rate) to these preferences. Sugiyono (2019) explains that the Likert scale is specifically used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals or groups regarding social phenomena.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used is a descriptive analytical method, namely describing the data collected in the form of words, images and not numbers. Data originating from manuscripts, interviews, field notes, documents, and so on, is then described so that it can provide clarity on the facts or realities. Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out before entering the field, while in the field and after finishing in the field. In this case, Nasution stated that the analysis had started since formulating and explaining the problem, before going into the field and continued until the writing of the research results.

Data analysis becomes a guideline for further research until, if possible, a grounded theory. However, in qualitative research, data analysis is more focused during the process in the field along with data collection. In fact, data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing activity that occurs throughout the investigative process rather than after the process. In reality, qualitative data analysis takes place during the data collection process rather than after data collection is complete. How to calculate percentage frequency data analysis using the following formula: (Sudijono, 2018).

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

Information:

P = Percentage searched (relative frequency)

F = Frequency

N = Number of respondents

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Hasil

The researcher has collected research data obtained through three research techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh City. The researcher will describe and analyze the collected data to explain the research results. The data analysis chosen by the researcher is a descriptive quantitative analysis of data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation with related institutions. The data obtained by the researcher will be analyzed according to the focus of the research sourced from sources and observations in the class consisting of 36 students at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh City. The research conducted by the researcher focuses on An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Learning Listening at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh City

General Overview of State Vocational School 1 Banda Aceh City

SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is a state vocational high school located on Jl. Sultan Malikul Saleh, Lhong Raya, Banda Raya District, Banda Aceh City. This school began its journey in 1957. Currently, SMKN 1 Banda Aceh implements the revised 2013 curriculum for the Online Business and Marketing expertise program. SMKN 1 Banda Aceh received accreditation with an A rating and a score of 96 (accreditation in 2018) from the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M). SMKN 1 Banda Aceh was established based on the Establishment Decree Number 792/B.III KEDJ. 1975, and officially began operating based on the Operational Decree Number 421.5/C.1/588/6/2017.

Description of Research Participants

Research participation is an action or process in which individuals or groups voluntarily participate in a scientific study or research with the aim of providing data or information needed by researchers. The participants in this study were 36 students of SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh. The following can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

No	Name	Gender	Class
1	Agil Reihan	L	XI
2	Ahmad Naufal Razzak	L	XI
3	Arib Aufa Yuri	L	XI
4	Berril Khaliqarrahan	L	XI
5	Dzawata Afnan Mawardi	P	XI
6	Dafa Pasya Khadafi	L	XI
7	Faradila	P	XI
8	Habil Alfajar	L	XI
9	Hani Sofhiya	P	XI
10	Hilma Annisa	P	XI
11	Isyraqul Fathan Zunnur	L	XI
12	M. Afgan Firdiansyah	L	XI
13	M. Aufa Hafuza	L	XI
14	M. Fatih	L	XI
15	M. Fayadh Ghaisan Al Fatih	L	XI
16	Muammar Dian	L	XI
17	Muhammad Haykal Rosya	L	XI
18	Muhammad Iqra Adz Dzikri	L	XI
19	Muhammad Israk Ridha	L	XI
20	Muhammad Khairul Khasam	L	XI
21	Muhammad Nabil Al Faiz	L	XI
22	Muhammad Zidan Darmawan	L	XI
23	Nabila Zahra	P	XI
24	Nazwa Nur Az-Zahra	P	XI
25	Neilla Vennisa	P	XI
26	Reza Yuliansyah	L	XI
27	Riski Ramadhan	L	XI
28	Ryan Al Kahfi	L	XI
29	Salsabila Rizki Amelia	P	XI
30	Santi Dwianti	P	XI
31	Tm Anhar Ramadhan Zein	L	XI
32	Zaidan Fayyadh Ha'il	L	XI
33	Ziqran Elbeno	L	XI
34	Zuhra Ulya Hafidzah	P	XI
35	Zulfa Ulfida	P	XI
36	Fardad Kasir	P	XI

Pembahasan

The results of the study obtained by the author from the data collection process by distributing questionnaires to students or respondents. Students in this study were students at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh. The number of statements consisted of 25 statement items to respondents or students. To calculate the value and data analysis, the study used a Likert scale and each answer was given its own score. The research score of items for 28 statements with 5 alternative answers S (Sering), S (Selalu), KK (Kadang-Kadang), J (Jarang), and TP (Tidak Pernah). The statement is to find out students' responses to the analysis of student difficulties in learning listening skills at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh.

The results of the study showed that students of SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh experienced significant difficulties in listening skills. Of the 36 students who participated in the questionnaire, most showed challenges in understanding listening materials. The main factors that influenced these difficulties included cultural differences, diverse accents, poor recording quality, sentence complexity, and limited vocabulary. In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety also contributed to students' understanding. The average difficulty score reached 75,5%, indicating a fairly high level of difficulty.

Table 2. Percentage Details

Statement	Selalu (%)	Sering (%)	Kadang-Kadang (%)	Jarang (%)	Tidak Pernah (%)	Total (%)
1	24.2	27.2	25.0	12.1	18.2	100
2	24.2	54.5	21.2	6.1	6.1	100
3	27.8	44.4	16.7	8.3	2.8	100
4	33.3	38.9	22.2	8.3	2.8	100
5	36.1	54.5	8.3	6.1	0.0	100
6	30.6	44.4	13.9	6.1	6.1	100
7	30.6	41.7	19.4	8.3	2.8	100
8	30.6	36.1	16.7	8.3	8.3	100
9	22.2	54.5	16.7	13.9	2.8	100
10	25.0	52.8	8.3	8.3	6.1	100
11	33.3	54.5	16.7	2.8	0.0	100
12	25.0	44.4	11.1	11.1	8.3	100
13	36.1	44.4	5.6	8.3	5.6	100
14	38.9	44.4	11.1	2.8	2.8	100
15	30.6	50.0	5.6	8.3	5.6	100
16	38.9	50.0	8.3	6.1	0.0	100
17	30.6	41.7	11.1	13.9	2.8	100
18	25.0	55.6	16.7	2.8	0.0	100
19	44.4	41.7	8.3	2.8	2.8	100
20	19.4	55.6	16.7	5.6	2.8	100
21	33.3	30.6	19.4	11.1	5.6	100
22	33.3	41.7	16.7	5.6	2.8	100
23	33.3	38.9	16.7	5.6	5.6	100
24	22.2	58.3	13.9	2.8	2.8	100
25	27.8	52.8	11.1	5.6	2.8	100
26	27.8	55.6	8.3	2.8	5.6	100
27	25.0	47.2	11.1	11.1	5.6	100
28	33.3	47.2	16.7	5.6	2.8	100
Rata-Rata	30.2	45.3	14.5	6.8	4.1	100

The results of the analysis show that students of SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh often experience difficulties in understanding listening skills. The average percentage for the "always" category reached 30.2%, indicating that many students find it consistently difficult. The "often" category had the highest average of 45.3%, indicating that students often acknowledged challenges in the listening process. On the other hand, the "sometimes" category had an average percentage of 14.5%, while "rarely" and "never" each

had an average of 6.8% and 4.1%. This indicates that most students experience difficulties in at least some aspects of listening, and indicates the need for intervention in learning.

The findings of this study are in line with previous studies conducted by Hamouda (2013) and Goh (2000), which also found that EFL students face difficulties in listening due to factors such as different accents, poor recording quality, and limited vocabulary. A study by Ahsaniah (2012) showed that lack of vocabulary was a major obstacle for students in understanding listening materials. This indicates that listening difficulties are a common problem faced by students in various educational contexts. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of developing more effective teaching strategies and using relevant materials to help students overcome the difficulties they face.

CONCLUSION DAN SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Banda Aceh, it can be concluded that students experience various difficulties in learning listening skills. Factors that influence these difficulties include cultural differences, diverse accents, poor recording quality, sentence complexity, and limited vocabulary. In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety also play a role in reducing student understanding. The average percentage for the "often" category reached 45.3%, and for the "always" category reached 30.2%, indicating that the challenges in listening are quite high. Therefore, it is important for teachers to improve the quality of the material, provide cultural context, and create a conducive learning atmosphere. Effective listening strategy training is also needed so that students can be better prepared to face diverse materials.

Suggestions

The suggestions in this research are:

1. Teachers are advised to use more contextual and diverse materials, including authentic materials that reflect real situations, to help students understand different accents and cultural contexts.
2. Integrate listening exercises with a variety of accents into learning to help students get used to different pronunciation.
3. Create a calm and comfortable classroom atmosphere so that students can concentrate better when listening. Using a high-quality recording device is also important.

4. Provide training and guidance to students on effective listening strategies, such as noting down important information and making predictions, so that they can be more active in the listening process.
5. Conduct relaxation activities before the listening session to help reduce anxiety and increase student focus.

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