

The Teaching of Listening for EFL Students: An Overview

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Abstract

Methods and techniques used by both ESL and EFL students in listening may be the same but the manner of teaching should be different. For instance, ESL students can learn to listen outside the class by using authentic material as listening to the conversation of a librarian in the library (real situation) while EFL students can also do that by listening to the video provided by the teacher which performs a conversation between native speakers in a library. The students should exercise their listening skills more in order to improve their level of mastery of listening. Students better not only do exercise in listening class but also in other places. Students must be confident in their own answers to be better in listening class and can know their own mistakes.

Keywords: listening process, listening skill, the teaching of listening skill

A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages used by more than five hundred million people over the world. This is because English is needed in many aspects of life such as business, education, technology, and so on. Hence, English has become very important to learn for those who want to enhance their qualities and proficiencies in many cases. It can be said that, these days, English is viewed as a language that gives you access to the

world.¹ Jeremy Harmer states that English is a Lingua Franca², it can be defined as a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other and where one or both are using it as a 'second' language.³

However, many countries make English as their second language (ESL), indeed. According to Carter and Nunan, the term ESL is used to refer to situations in which English is being taught and learned in countries, contexts, and cultures in which English is the predominant language of communication. The teaching of English to immigrants in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States typifies ESL.⁴

On the other hand, other countries such as Indonesia is not using English as their national language. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean they do not learn English either. English is only studied in formal classes or for specific purposes in Indonesia. One can say that English is learned as a Foreign Language (EFL) there. The fact that Indonesian aren't English native speakers, cause learning English is quite complicated for them. At least, the teacher should learn more to have a good qualification in English; to be able to teach English well. The teacher should know what kind of basic skills have an essential role in teaching English and of course, other important aspects as well.

Michelle Maxom claims that in language courses there are four main skills that need to be included to make students truly proficient. These are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.⁵ Simply, it can be assumed that reading and listening are skills to comprehend the information given by the teacher whereas speaking and writing are skills to produce a product from the explanation given by the teacher. All of the skills taught in language teaching have their own role in the term of communication, such as listening which could help people to get information for a specific purpose. Furthermore, listening and other skills are important and tied to each other.

As a matter of fact, listening is the first language mode that children acquire. It provides a foundation for all aspects of language; cognitive development and it plays a lifelong role in the processes of learning and communication that is essential to productive participation in life.⁶ It's also a prerequisite to speaking. Moreover, listening plays a crucial role in developing overall language proficiency.⁷ Listening is

¹ Michelle Maxom, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language For Dummies*, (England: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2009), p. 9.

³ Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, 4th Ed., (London: Longman, 2006), p. 1.

⁴ Ronald Carter and David Nunan, *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2.

⁵ Michelle Maxom, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language...*, p. 4.

⁶ Muhammad Javed, *Analysis Studies' Competency in Listening Comprehension of the English Language at Pakistani Secondary School Level: Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, p. 332.

⁷ Mohammad Afsharrad, *The Effect of Transcribing on Elementary Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension: Dinamika Ilmu*, Vol. 15 No. 20, 2015. p. 202.

the primary way of education and learning as well as a crucial skill in the academic education of the students.⁸ Nunan claimed that over 50 percent of the time student spend functioning in the foreign language will be devoted to listening.⁹ We couldn't imagine, without listening how can people get information. How can people speak without any information in their mind and how can people write, because people not only get information from a written text but also listen to others?

The term listening is used in language teaching to refer to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language.¹⁰ It means to teach listening teacher should be able to understand the content that was presented in English well. Truly to say that the teacher who teach listening in EFL, most of them are non-native speakers as well as the students, the problem is listening one of a difficult subject to teach, therefore, how can non-native speaker teachers guide their students if they lack ability in English themselves.

Likely to say that it depends on the teacher's competence; not only in teaching but also in English. Thus, this matter later builds the awareness of educators and experts of the native speaker to create the methods, strategies, and techniques to facilitate non-native speakers as a guide to teach English in their own countries. As the result of encounters, the matters that have been mentioned above many methods and techniques are created in order to help the teachers to go through those problems.

No doubt, that ESL students are easier to learn English because they live in a native speaker's environment, or in some ways they use the language more frequently in their countries than EFL students do. Meanwhile for EFL students might be hard because the lack of a place to support the developing their skills to learn English. That's true if they could learn English in the courses or their schools but they couldn't use it in their daily activities; so, it just gives them a few benefits on learning. Unless their parents are habitual to speak English at home, so it could help them to improve the ability to learn English. Unfortunately, it's probably hard to find in some countries as well as in Indonesia, except in some places.

Furthermore, In Indonesian Universities, English is a compulsory subject. This according to Indonesian Government Regulation No. 19 Year 2005 in Article 9 about National Education Standard, which establishes that The Unit of Higher Education Level Curriculum must include of Religious Education, Civic Education, Indonesian Language, and English.¹¹ Yet, there are so many universities in Indonesia such as University of Indonesia, University of Mulawarman, State University of Malang and

⁸ Selim Emiroglu, General Behaviours of Students with Poor Listening Skills or Who Do Not Listen To the Lectures According To the Teachers' Opinions: *Mevlana International Journal of Education (MIJE)* Vol. 4 No. 1, 2014. p. 164.

⁹ I.S.P. Nation and Jonathan Newton, *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2009), p. 37.

¹⁰ Ronald Carter and David Nunan, *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language...*, p. 7.

¹¹ Keputusan Direktur Jendral Penndidikan Tinggi Departemen Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia Nomor: 43/DIKTI/Kep/2006.

so on but not all of the universities have an English Department. Every university that opens an English Department, indeed has advantages and disadvantages. Still, the quality of some skills which own by every student in every university is different. For instance, in term listening skill. In the previous study that had been conducted by Cintya El Meysarah, found that listening ability of State University of Surabaya students is good enough meanwhile in Riau University, as a previous study that has been done by Septia Ristanti, Eliwarti, and Desri Maria, found that listening ability of Riau University students is still low.

In the end, those matters carry us on the contrary of the quality of listening in ESL and EFL students. Their quality of listening may be different based on some factors influencing. For example, at the level of university, ideally, a student of a university has to be able to easily understand what had been talking by the lecturer or even the native speakers. To investigate this matter, the researcher was conducted a research on how is the quality of listening skill of IAIN students especially in fourth-semester of English Education Department. This research is not conducted without any reason but for the sake of listening as one of an essential skill to improve student's competence in learning English. Another reason that makes researcher decides to have an inquiry in listening is that listening is the first basic skill that must people acquire to learn a foreign language, however, yet researchers in listening area are meager. Since 1933, some studies revealed that less research on listening comprehension is conducted as compared to research on other skills.

B. LISTENING FOREIGN LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

Successful in listening foreign language can be looked at as the strategy uses by the listener when doing a listening activity. When the listener knows what kind of strategy that should be used in listening, they might be easy to reach the aim of listening. Thus, the strategy might have an advantage for the listener who learns to listen to foreign languages, such as English. For instance, people who learn English will have some difficulties to understand all of the sentences they heard to prevent them misunderstanding the meaning, they need a strategy. Carter and Nunan state, listening strategies are conscious plans to deal with incoming speech, particularly when the listener knows that he or she must compensate for incomplete input or partial understanding.¹²

Here are two kinds of strategies in listening identified by Buck:

- a. Cognitive strategies: Mental activities related to comprehending and storing the input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval.
- b. Metacognitive strategies: Those conscious or unconscious mental activities that perform an executive function in the management of cognitive strategies.

¹² Ronald Carter and David Nunan, *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages...*, p. 10.

On the other hand, O'Maley and Chamot claimed three main type of strategies, the two strategies are as identified by Buck before (cognitive and metacognitive) and one another strategy is the social strategy. From O'Maley and Chamot perspective, the metacognitive strategy was kind of self-regulated learning, it included the attempt to plan, check, monitor, select, revise, and evaluate. For instance, for metacognitive planning strategies, learners would clarify the objective and anticipated listening task, and attend to specific aspects of language input that assisted in understanding the task.¹³ Whereas, for social strategy, Vandergrift define the strategies as the techniques listeners use to collaborate with others, to verify understanding or to lower anxiety.¹⁴

From the explanation above, can be concluded that in listening strategy listener self awareness is needed. Afterwards, concerning to listening between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, they have a relation to how mental activities is work. However, some experts have different view about which strategy can help students better.

1. Listening Processes

In this section will be explained two processes that exist in listening:

a. Bottom-up Processes

These are the processes the listener uses to assemble message piece-by-piece from the speech stream, going from the parts to the whole.¹⁵ Listeners build understanding by starting with the smallest units of the acoustic message: individual sounds, or phonemes.¹⁶ In another word, at this case, a sentence in a text understood little by little from sounds which later form into the word, then up to the level of a phrase, clause and in the end become as sentence completely. This because this process follows the traditional model which states that listening is a process of transmission of information.

b. Top-down Processes

Top-down processes involve the listener in going from the whole—their prior knowledge and their content rhetorical schemata—to the parts.¹⁷ It emphasizes the use of previous knowledge in processing a text rather than relying upon the individual sounds and words.¹⁸ Different from bottom-up process, this process claim that in fact

¹³ Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani and Mohammad Reza Ahmadi, *A Study of Factors Affecting EFL Learners' English Listening Comprehension and the Strategies for Improvement*, *Journal of English Teaching and Research* Vol. 2 No. 5, (Finland: Academy Publisher, 2011), p. 981.

¹⁴ Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani and Mohammad Reza Ahmadi, *A Study of Factors Affecting EFL Learners' English Listening Comprehension and the Strategies for Improvement*, *Journal of English Teaching...*, p. 981.

¹⁵ I. S. P. Nation and Jonathan Newton, *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and...*, p. 40.

¹⁶ John Flowerdew and Lindsay Miller, *Second Language Listening: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, p. 24.

¹⁷ I. S. P. Nation and Jonathan Newton, *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and...*, p. 40.

¹⁸ John Flowerdew and Lindsay Miller, *Second Language Listening...*, p. 25.

listening will be more easily identified if listeners have a knowledge about the subject that being present rather than understanding from sounds, for instance in the sentence “The cat sat on the /mæ/”, listeners will easily predict the following sound is likely to be /t/. Finally, it brings to the believed that prior knowledge is essential for listeners.

Those two processes which have been mentioned above, only a little part of processes that exist in listening. Besides those, there are other processes in listening such as the interactive model. However, the combination of those two processes in listening will not make listening view as a single skill, but as a variety of sub-skills.

2. Listening Skill

Listening skill have broad application. Many people may find to use them quite naturally. A good listening helps people explore what they are thinking and feeling.¹⁹ Listening skill can be defined as a receptive communication skill that has a parallel relationship to reading and its aural aspects, is closely related to speech.²⁰ Furthermore, in learning language, listening also have an important role because the first time someone acquires language by listening. Even so, listening skill is still considered less important than other skills. There is still plenty of evidence which can prove that listening is under-valued. For instance, when there is a pressure on contact hours, it is often the listening session that is cut. Students are rarely assessed on their listening skills, and the problem of many weak listeners pass undiagnosed.²¹

Nevertheless, there is an approach that gave more importance to listening based on different ideas. Nord expresses this view clearly:

Some people now believe that learning a language is not just learning to talk, but rather that learning a language is building a map of meaning in the mind. These people believe that talking may indicate that the language was learned, but they do not believe that practice in talking is the best way to build up this “cognitive” map in the mind. To do this, they feel, the best method is to practice meaningful listening.

In the end, previously still many experts in language learning that have the different angle on the term of the importance of listening. This because every expert has different views and definitions on defining what is listening and which skills are a very important skill that has a big influence on other skills. Still, it doesn't matter because they have strong reason to keep their belief on which one is the most valuable.

¹⁹ Andrew Gottlieb, *Peer Counseling: Skills, Ethics, and Perspectives*, Vincent J. D'Andrea and Peter Salovey, Science and Behavior Books, p. 1.

²⁰ Muhammad Javed, Analysis Studies' Competency in Listening Comprehension of the English..., p. 331.

²¹ John Field, *Listening in The Language Classroom*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 1.

Nonetheless, what we should remember that all of the skills are connected each other and cannot be separated.

3. Listening Skill Based on Some Experts Perspective

There have been numerous attempts to describe listening comprehension in terms of taxonomies of sub-skills. This approach is based on the notion that these skills underlie the process, and the act of listening consists of the application of various separate skills.²² Besides, every person has a different point of view for every single thing that exists in this world as well as some experts in the term of listening. In this section, the researcher would like to present the view of some experts' perspective about the skills are required in a listening activity.

a. Listening Skill according to Anderson and Lynch

Anderson and Lynch point out some skills that must simultaneously integrate by the listener in listening, they are:

- 1) Identify spoken signals from the midst of surrounding sounds;
- 2) Segments the stream of speech into words;
- 3) Grasp the syntax of the utterance(s);
- 4) Formulate an appropriate response.²³

b. Nunan's Listening Skill

Nunan notes some skills for successful listening skill, it involves:

- 1) Skill in segmenting the stream of speech into meaningful words and phrases;
- 2) Recognizing word classes;
- 3) Relating the incoming message to one's own background knowledge;
- 4) Identifying the rhetorical and functional intent of an utterance;
- 5) Interpreting rhythm, stress, and intonation;
- 6) Extracting gist/essential information.²⁴

c. Rost's Listening skill

One of the categorizations of listening sub-skills is that proposed by Rost, here they are:

- 1) Skills emphasizing perception: these involve recognizing prominence within utterances.
- 2) Skills emphasizing interpretation, these involve: formulating a sense for speaker's utterances, formulating a conceptual framework that links utterances together, and interpreting plausible intention (s) of the speaker in making the utterance.

²² Eva Barta, *Test Taker Listening Comprehension Sub-Skills and Strategies*, WoPaLP Vol. 4, 2010, p. 63.

²³ David Nunan, *Designing Tasks for The Communicative Classroom*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 23.

²⁴ David Nunan, *Designing Tasks for The Communicative...*, p. 26.

3) Enacting skills: these involve utilizing representations of discourse to make appropriate responses.²⁵

d. Munbey's Listening Skills

Below is Munbey's view about skills that require for listening:

- 1) Discriminating sounds in isolated word forms.
- 2) Discriminating sounds in connected speech.
- 3) Discriminating strew patterns within words.
- 4) Recognizing variation in stress in connected speech.
- 5) Recognizing the use of stress in connected speech.
- 6) Understanding intonation patterns.
- 7) Interpreting attitudinal meaning.²⁶

e. Wills' Listening Skill

Here are some series of micro-skills of listening according to Wills:

- 1) Guessing unknown words or phrases without panic.
- 2) Using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understands.
- 3) Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information.
- 4) Retaining relevant point.
- 5) Recognizing discourse markers.
- 6) Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress.
- 7) Understanding inferred information.²⁷

From statements above, can be concluded that even there are some different perspective in listening skill, still, there also many similarities that found in expert's idea such as making an appropriate response in listening, understanding intonation patterns and skill in segmenting stream. Later in the level of mastery listening, all of these ideas are combined in order to specify them.

C. The Indicators of Listening Mastery

Al-Musalli has specified some experts statements into four sub-skills involved in listening:

1. The Literal Level, this involves three main types of skill: phonological, syntactic, and lexical skills.
2. The Inferential Level, this level is related to the comprehension of the text.
3. Critical Level, this level includes: making an appropriate judgment about the message, the speaker personality, and the topic.

²⁵ Alaa Al-Musalli, *Listening Comprehension as a Complex Skill and the Sub-Skills Involved...*, p. 66.

²⁶ Alaa Al-Musalli, *Listening Comprehension as a Complex Skill and the Sub-Skills Involved...*, p. 64.

²⁷ Li Chengxi, *Factor Affecting Listening Comprehension and Strategies for Listening Class: CELEA Journal (Bimonthly)*, Vol. 28 No. 3, 2005, p. 115.

4. Creative Level, this includes handling verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and responding in the proper way.²⁸

Those four sub-skills above also have a connection to the classes of cognitive (intellectual) behaviours identified by Bloom and others since they were taken from listening comprehension sub-skills; which are as well meant as thinking skills. “Knowledge” relate to the literal level of comprehension; “Comprehension” and “Application” to interpretative level; “Analysis” and “Evaluation” to the critical level; and “Synthesis” to the creative level.²⁹ Nevertheless, at last, from those sub-skills above only three level are chosen to be included on the indicators of listening mastery, they are:

1. In The Literal Level:
 - a. able to discriminate the words that sound similar (phonological skill);
 - b. understanding of the word order (syntactical skill);
 - c. and vocabulary knowledge (lexical skill).
2. In Inferential Level:
 - a. Inferential skill: Inferring information about the speaker’s attitude, intention, motivation and thought.
 - b. Textual skill: Grasping the development of the text (making a connection between parts of the text, recognizing discourse marker, and cohesive devices).
3. In Critical Level:
 - a. able to making an appropriate judgment about the message or speaker’s personality.
 - b. Able to judge how purpose interaction is achieved.

The listening skill should be taught optimally by enhancing the students’ listening skills through various media, such as songs³⁰³¹³², radio drama series³³, youtube

²⁸ Alaa Al-Musalli, *Listening Comprehension as a Complex Skill and the Sub-Skills Involved...*, p. 67.

²⁹ Etna R. Reid, *Comprehension Skill Can be Taught*, (Salt Lake City: Educational Leadership; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1981), p. 457.

³⁰ Maria Ulfa, “The Use of English Songs to Teach Listening Skill,” *EDUCASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Pengajaran, Dan Pembelajaran*, December 30, 2019, 129–37.

³¹ Sitti Hadijah, “Songs in the Teaching of Listening for Elementary School Students,” *EDUCASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Pengajaran, Dan Pembelajaran*, December 30, 2019, 81–95.

³² Maria Ulfa, “The Effectiveness Of Using English Songs To Teach Listening Skill of the Senior High Students in Samarinda,” *EDUCASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Pengajaran, Dan Pembelajaran*, 2021, 37–47.

³³ Anastasia Nelladia Cendra, “BBC Radio Drama Series Cabin Pressure: Abu Dhabi for Giving Listening Exposure to Students: A View from Humour Perspective,” *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics* 2, no. 2 (November 26, 2017): 107–20, <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefll.v2i2.39>.

videos³⁴, online media³⁵, and MALL³⁶. The target of using those media are directing to enhance the student's listening skills³⁷ as well as to solve the students' problems in speaking English³⁸, since the listening skill is also contributing to the development of speaking skill.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The quality of listening skills based on the mastery levels of listening are: literal, inferential, and critical. The literal level desires students to have three main types of skills: phonological, syntactic, and lexical skills. Whereas, Inferential level is related to the skill of text comprehension. Moreover, the Critical level wanted students to be able in making an appropriate judgment about the message, the speaker's personality, and the topic.

The lecturer should help students in enhancing their listening skills by providing material or knowledge about techniques or methods which might help them to improve their quality of listening.

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³⁴ Zulfah Fakhruddin et al., "Designing English Listening Materials through YouTube Video Editing: Training for English Teachers of Islamic Junior High Schools, Parepare, South Sulawesi," *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)* 4, no. 2 (May 14, 2020): 275–90, <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v4i2.475>.

³⁵ Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, "Phonology and Online Media Used in Enhancing Listening Skill," *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics* 5, no. 2 (November 24, 2020): 267–78, <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefl.v5i2.278>.

³⁶ Rully Agung Yudhiantara and Andang Saehu, "Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education," *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)* 2, no. 1 (2017): 21–31.

³⁷ Erawati Wiyono Putri, Umar Fauzan, and Rostanti Toba, "The Quality of Listening Skill of the Indonesian EFL Students," *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 3, no. 1 (2018): 79.

³⁸ Sayuri Sayuri, "Problems in Speaking Faced By EFL Students of Mulawarman University," *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 2016): 47–61, <https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefll.v1i1.4>.

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