

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARD LISTENING COMPREHENSION BY THE FIRST GRADERS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM OF STKIP PGRI PACITAN

Dwi Rahayu ¹⁾, Chusna Apriyanti ²⁾

¹⁾ Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris STKIP PGRI Pacitan
Email: dwirahayu6537@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aimed to know the students' perception toward listening comprehension. The researchers used descriptive quantitative research design. The data were gathered from the first graders of English Education Program of STKIP PGRI Pacitan. The researcher implemented Likert Scale questionnaire and interview to collect the data. The result showed that the students' self-assessment to listening ability was on the level of average (83.33%) and good (16.67%). Among the other English skills, listening was in the lowest level of the students' skill, only 11.11% students who have "good" perception to the instruction of English during their high school. It gave effect to their perception toward listening skill at the college level. The students believed that those perceptions are caused by six factors: belief in the importance of listening, feeling toward the listening difficulties, feeling that listening is boring and uninteresting, low excitement toward listening, less sufficient training in listening and less experience about listening strategies.

Keywords: *listening comprehension, listening text, listening perception*

INTRODUCTION

Undeniable, listening is the important part in learning English. It is one of the four English language skills, together with reading, writing and speaking. Unlike those three other skills, listening is argued as the most difficult skill in learning the language. Since it deals with many supported factors that cause the students achievement in listening skills.

Listening is not hearing. Listening needs the complex and integrated ability simultaneously with the knowledge to process the inputs. Besides, it also needs the comfort setting in order to make the students can listen to the task easily. Listening deals with the students' psychological factors and the physical factors. Both of those aspects support the students' achievement in listening.

Teaching listening needs integrated ways. It covers the element of students, teacher, material, and classroom management. Those four elements have to support each other. The students or listener aspect deals with the ideal condition of students in order to make them can listen to the task well. It consists of the high motivation and interest to listen to the task, enough background knowledge related to the task, high level of focus and concentration, etc. The teacher aspects deal with her/his ability in

teaching listening effectively. It covers the various material and strategies. Besides, he/she needs to prepare the listening teaching-learning process in a structured sequence, like dividing the class into pre listening-while listening-post listening.

The material aspect covers the various materials presented as the listening task. The teachers should provide the different topic and form in each time-scheduled. Classroom management deals with the classroom situation during the class. It is important for the teacher to make sure that the instrument can run well. Besides, there is no noises and unnecessary sound during the listening class that can disturb the students' concentration.

All of the aspects above give effect to the students' perception. If those four aspects can be maintained well, the students can have good perception toward listening. Good perception is important for teaching listening. It makes the students highly motivated to answer the task. Besides, it makes the students prepare themselves to join the class well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening is vital skill among those four skills in learning the language. It is vital because it is admitted as the vehicle for

language learning. It is the input media when the students want to comprehend the language. Rost (2002) stated that listening is a vital mental capacity-one of the principal's mean by which we can understand and take part in the world around". It is clear that by listening, people can hear millions information from the world in general. Besides, Hamouda (2013) stated that listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency. It means that listening and speaking is a combination for students to learn the language. Through listening, the students can comprehend the others' speech and explanation. As well as, through speaking, they can give the response relates to what they heard.

Wolvin and Coakley (1991) support the theory above. They stated that it is evident that listening is more important for the learning process since it is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education. It implies that listening is a vital medium in learning the language. Therefore, students should have the good listening ability. It is a medium in all level of education. Since in elementary school, or even start from the birth, people learn many things through their ability in listening. All of the theories above clearly stated that listening is the most important element in learning.

However, in spite of the importance of the listening skill in foreign language learning, the teaching of listening comprehension has been neglected and poorly taught the aspect of English in many EFL programs (Mandelsohn and Rubin, 1995). In addition, Hamouda (2013) confirmed that EFL learners have serious problems in English listening comprehension because teachers pay more attention to reading, speaking, and writing. Listening and speaking skills are not important parts of many course books or curricula, and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lesson (Ismail, 2015).

Teaching listening is something difficult. Therefore, the teachers sometimes "skip" this skill in teaching English. It needs teacher's

creativity in designing the material and the task in order to gain the students' interest. Many listening tasks are presented in monotonous ways, like answering the question based on the passage, or even giving circle mark or cross the correct answer, filling the blank, arranging the sequence, etc. these make the students boring toward listening.

Besides, teachers sometimes difficult to assess the students' listening skill. They need to prepare many supported facilities, like recorded material in cassette or CD, students' worksheet, etc. listening depends on the facilities much rather than other skill, it needs laboratory with the complete audio-video program. Therefore, some teachers are "lazy" to teach listening in the same portion with other skills, like writing, speaking, and reading.

All of the factors above are related to the external factor. Many internal supporting factors give influence toward the listening skill. Bloomfield (2013) stated that the pronunciation of words might also differ greatly from the way they appear in print. This relates to the material. Some students have difficulties to comprehend the meaning of spoken words since they have limited time to think deeper and guess based on the context. Another point to be considered is that vocabulary and grammar also tend to be far more colloquial and much less formal (Osada, 2004). This makes the second problem for the students.

In addition, the other problem is related to psychological preparation of the students. Vandergrift (2004) stated that oral texts exist in real time and need to be processed quickly; when the text is over, only a mental representation remains. Unlike reading, listening requires instantaneous processing with little or no option to access the spoken input again, making the skill arguably more complex than, for example, and reading.

All of the explanation above relate to the language elements of the listening task. however, sociolinguistic elements of listening, such as the students' cultural background and the students' knowledge of the cultural

background of the foreign language can also play a significant part in the student's comprehension of verbal discourse (Walker, 2014).

The factors presented above influence the students' perception toward listening. The feeling of "difficult", "boring", "not interesting", etc. make the students have low achievement in listening. It is like "stressor" for them. However, the students' perceptions toward listening have to be developed well. It is started by the changing the student's viewpoint toward listening. It is not easy. It needs the integrated way of four elements above (the students, the teacher, material, and classroom management).

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers used descriptive quantitative research design. The data were gathered from the first graders of English Education Program of STKIP PGRI Pacitan. The class consists of eighteen students. The researcher implemented Likert Scale questionnaire and interview to collect the data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

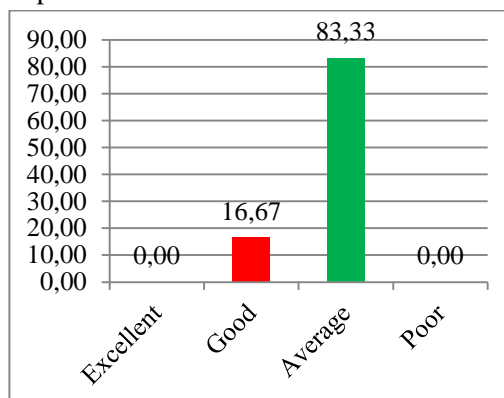
The results are differentiated into three categories: students' self-assessment to listening ability, students' perception to the instruction of English skills taught during their high school, and the students' perception of the benefit of listening skills.

Students' self-assessment to listening ability

Self-assessment is similar to self-esteem. It means the student's belief about their ability in listening comprehension. It also deals with their confidence in answering the listening task. It is argued that the higher the students' self-assessment, the higher their score in completing the listening task. Here, the students can "value" themselves in their ability in listening task. It can give motivation in the teaching-learning process. If the students say, "I can", it means that they are ready for learning harder. Therefore, it can increase their

motivation and later it can increase their achievement.

The result of students' self-assessment is presented below:



Picture 1. Students' Self-Assessment Listening Ability

The chart above shows that the majority of the students (83.33%) believe that their ability in listening comprehension is on the "average" level than the other students in the classroom, while 16.67% show that their self-assessment toward listening comprehension is "good". This represents that they have less self-assessment on listening comprehension task even though some students still believe that they can do the listening task well. Their self-assessment here depends on some factors, such as listening materials, linguistics features, failure to concentrate, psychological factors, listener, speaker, and physical setting. All of the factors above give effects on the students' ability in listening comprehension.

The problems on listening material deal with some factors. They are: the students difficulties related to too many unfamiliar words including jargons and idioms, the students' difficulties related to complex grammatical structures, the students' difficulties related to long spoken text, the students' difficulties related to unfamiliar topic, the students' difficulties in using their experience background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text, the students' difficulties in understanding every single word of incoming speech, and the students' difficulties to listen the difficult passage. All of the material problems above give impacts on

the students' self-assessment toward listening comprehension.

Besides, the linguistic features of listening task material also influence the students' self-assessments. The students' difficulties of linguistic features are as follows: the students' difficulties in dealing with colloquial language and slang, the students' difficulties in understanding the reduced form, the students' difficulties related to familiar pronunciation but they difficult to recognize the words, the students' difficulties in recognizing the speaker's signal when moving from the point to another, the students' difficulties in encountering an unknown word, and the students' difficulties to infer the meaning of the unknown word that make the students stop listening, the students' difficulties in dealing long and complex sentences.

Concentration is also the important aspect in students' listening comprehension. By having high concentration, the students can focus on the listening task. The students' difficulties dealing with the failure to concentrate are as follows: the students' difficulties to focus when they have an expected answer in mind, the students' difficulties to concentrate because they search the answer and listen to the dialogue at the same time, the students' difficulties to keep concentrating when the text is too long, the students' difficulties to concentrate when they think about the meaning of new words, the students' difficulties to concentrate when the recording is in a poor quality, and the students' difficulties to concentrate when they think of another question. All of the concentration problems above give impacts to the students' listening ability.

The students' psychological factors also cause the students' comprehension ability. The psychological factors of students in listening are as follows: students' nervousness and worries when they do not understand the spoken text, the students' difficulties to understand the uninteresting topic, the students stop listening when they have problems in understanding a

listening text, they feel disappointed when they do not arrive at a total comprehension of an oral text, they fear that they cannot understand what they hear.

Sometimes, the problems that give effect to the students' perception toward listening come from the listeners themselves. The problems related to listeners are as follows: the students' difficulties to get the general understanding of the spoken text from the first listening, the students' difficulties to predict what would come next, the students' difficulty to quickly remember words or phrases they have just heard, the students' difficulties to recognize words they know because of the way they are pronounced, the students' difficulties in recognizing the spoken word even though those words are familiar in written form, the students' difficulties when listening to English without transcript and the students' difficulties to answer questions which require other than short answer (why or how question).

The speakers of the listening task also give influence toward the students' perception on listening. The problems related to the speakers are as follows: the students' difficulties to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses, the students' difficulties to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced well, the students' difficulties to understand the meaning of spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language, the students' difficulties to understand well when speakers speak with a variety of accents, the students' difficulties to understand well when speakers speak too fast, the students' difficulties to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough, and the students' difficulties to understand the recorded material if they are unable to get things repeated.

In addition, the physical setting also gives effects to the students' perception toward listening comprehension. It deals with the surrounding condition and the equipment. The

problems related to physical conditions are as follows: the students' difficulties to concentrate with noises around, the students' difficulties related to unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player, and the students' difficulties related to unclear sounds resulting from poor equipment.

All of the factors above influence the students' perception toward listening. Later, it influences the students' achievement on listening comprehension. It is assumed that the higher the student's good perception toward listening comprehension, the higher their achievement on listening comprehension. By having high positive perception, the students can take "a risk" to answer the listening task whatever the condition will happen. However, the result of the research tells that the students' perception is in the level of "average". It is not completely bad and poor. Average here means that the students' perception is unstable. It gives effects to the students' achievement. Some students say that they stop listening when the recorded material is unclear, but some students keep listening to the unclear material if the topics are familiar to them. Those conditions make the students' score on listening comprehension unstable.

Students perception to the instruction of English skills taught during their high school education

Learning English covers four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. All of these skills must be taught simultaneously in order to make students have good English language ability. Those skills are supported by masteries, such as vocabularies and pronunciation. However, the students still have the different perception of those skills. Later, it gives influence to their achievement in English.

The teachers also give different treatment for those four skills. Reading and writing are the skills that are easy to be learned by the students. Both of the skills have clear material and instruction. Besides, the external

factors do not give much influence toward learning of those skills. Reading is passive process learning, but the students can handle this skill much. For example, whether they are asked to read long text, they still can comprehend the text by finding clues from the words or the context of the text. Writing is active learning skill, but the students can violate the words when they forget the actually needed words.

Speaking and listening are the skills that need to be learned effectively. In speaking, many psychological factors give effects to the speaking performance, such as nervousness and self-confidence. Besides, the masteries of vocabularies, pronunciation, stress, etc.become the main factors in speaking. In listening skill, both the psychological and physical factors give effects to the listening skill. The psychological factors cover the areas like fear, worries, and anxiety when the students cannot answer the listening task. The physical factors, like the unclear recording, the surrounding noises, and poor quality of cassette also become the important factor that makes the students have less perception toward listening skill.

The students' perception of the four skills in English is presented in the table below:

Table 1: The Students' Perception toward the English Skill

| Skills | E | G | A | P |
|-----------|------|-------|-------|------|
| Reading | 0,00 | 77,78 | 22,22 | 0,00 |
| Writing | 0,00 | 44,44 | 50,00 | 5,56 |
| Speaking | 0,00 | 27,78 | 72,22 | 0,00 |
| Listening | 0,00 | 11,11 | 88,89 | 0,00 |

Note: E: Excellent, G: Good, A: Average, and P: Poor

The table above shows that the majority of the students are good in reading skill (77.78%), while the rest of the students are average on reading skill (22.22%). This result indicates that the students have high rating on reading skill. They can comprehend the reading skill well. They believe that they can conquer the reading instruction because of several reasons. First, reading deal with practical and

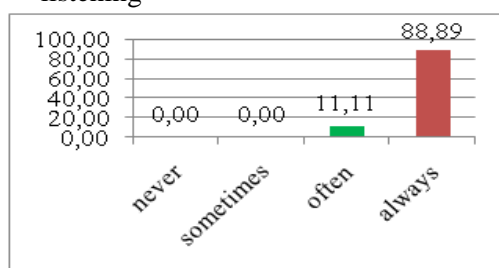
interesting media or techniques. Here, the teachers are easily providing the interesting reading texts that are suitable for the students. There is millions printable text on the internet that can be used as the material. Besides, the teacher can use many interesting games or techniques in teaching reading, like talking stick, authentic material, or just keeping the text in the hole that the students can find it in a field trip activity. Second, they have time to read once and repeat again, when they have less understanding of the text. The reading tasks allow the students to repeat the text. Even the reading comprehension skill in TOEFL Test, the students have enough time to read the text more than one. Third, they can answer with many possible answers. The answers are always provided in the text. Besides, they can open the dictionary if that have the difficulties in finding the words' meaning.

From the table, it is also clear that listening is the lowest level in students' skill rating. There are 88.89% students having average rate and 11.11% have the good rating. This result is caused by many factors that are presented in point 1, like the problems related to the material, linguistic features, failure to concentrate, psychological factor, speaker, listener, and the physical factor.

Students' perception of the benefit of listening skills

In learning, the students' beliefs toward what they learned are very important. It is a motivating factor in learning. They will be serious in learning when they know the benefit of listening.

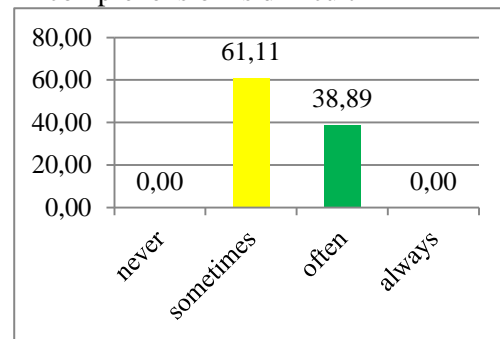
a. The students' belief in the importance of listening



Picture 2. The Students' Belief on the Importance of Listening

The chart above shows that the majority of the students (88.89%) always believe that listening is important in language learning, while the rest of the students (11.11%) say that listening skill is "often" important. Listening is important because the majority input in language learning is based on the listening skill.

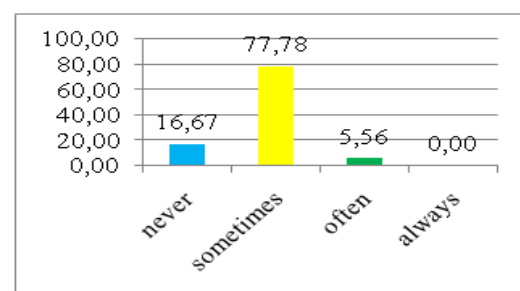
b. The students' belief that listening comprehension is difficult



Picture 3. The Students' Belief that Listening Comprehension is Difficult

The chart above shows that majority of the students (61.11%) students believe that listening comprehension is difficult and the rest of the students (38.89%) say that they often feel that listening comprehension is difficult. Those feelings influence their result in listening comprehension. This is a kind of psychological factor. The feeling of worries and fear make the students have low motivation in joining the listening class. It makes them have less energy to learn. They will be pessimistic toward the result, and later they cannot enjoy their listening task.

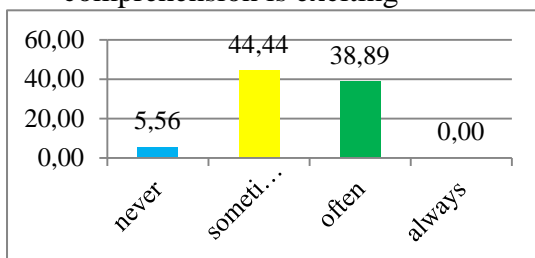
c. The students' belief that listening comprehension is boring and not interesting



Picture 4. The Students' Belief that Listening Comprehension is Boring and Not Interesting.

The chart above shows that majority of the students (77.78%) believe that listening comprehension is boring and not interesting. It deals with the topics and the strategies in listening task. It happens when the teacher cannot give various materials to the students. They just keep the material from the textbook and use the monotonous technique, like filling the blank or answering the questions based on the recorded material. These feelings make the students lazy in answering listening task. Surprisingly, there are 16.67% students never feel boring and not interesting to the listening comprehension. This result can motivate them in learning, even though it is not significant. It happens because learning listening means learning many elements in one complete way. When they get interesting media in learning to listen, the problem may arise from the storage of vocabularies and knowledge of the text. Therefore, these elements are supported each other to make listening skill well.

d. The students' belief that listening comprehension is exciting

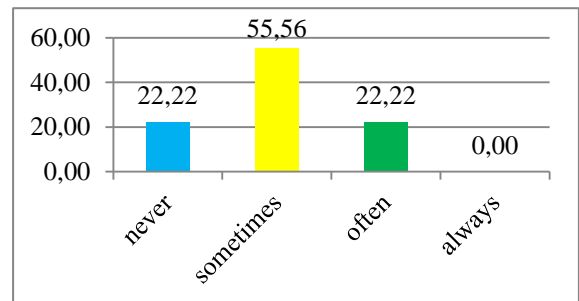


Picture 5. The Students' Belief that Listening Comprehension is Exciting

The chart above shows that almost half of the students (44.44%) sometimes feel exciting when they listen to the listening task. the rest of the students (38.89%) say often feel exciting to the listening task and 5.56% say never. it indicates that no one in the class feels that listening comprehension is exciting. Their less excitement toward listening are caused by many factors, such as the unfamiliar topic, unknown word, unclear recorded material, noisy environment, fast conversation, long task, unclear pronunciation from the speaker, limited time to do the task, etc. besides, it is also caused by the teacher's factor, like monotonous

techniques in teaching listening and the material. The students will be boring if the teachers use similar techniques and material when they teach listening. Here, the student's excitement actually can motivate the students to enjoy listening class. Later, they will have the high score in listening task.

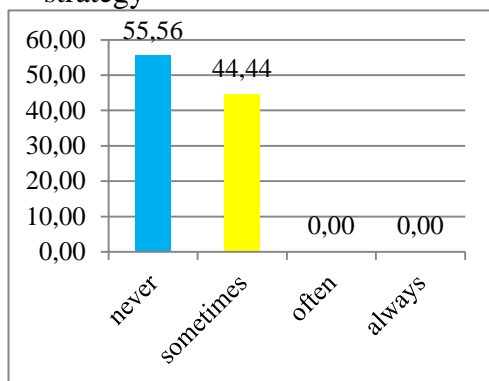
e. The students have sufficient training in English listening comprehension during their school



Picture 6. The Students have Sufficient Training in English Listening Comprehension during Their school.

The chart above shows that majority of the students (55.56%) sometimes have sufficient training in English listening comprehension during their school. The rest of the students (22.22%) students answer "never" and 22.22% students answer "often". It means that the students have less training on the listening task before entering the college level. This happens because the listening teaching and learning process mix all of these skills in one semester. Even though the book differentiates the skill into the scheduled time, but the teacher sometimes, violates the sufficient training based on skills. For example, the teacher asks the students to write "the expression" in ordering food in the restaurant in speaking class. Here, it is unclear whether the instruction is writing or speaking. It is unclear because the instruction is asking the students to write, but actually, the "core" of the material is speaking (how to order foods in a restaurant). This unclear instruction makes the students cannot learn all of the skill simultaneously and effectively. Moreover, listening is difficult to be learned if the equipment is not provided.

f. The students never heard the listening strategy



Picture 7: The Students Never Heard the Listening Strategy

The chart above shows that majority of the students (55.56%) ever heard the listening strategies and the rest of the students (44.44%) sometimes heard the listening strategies. Actually, by having experience in listening comprehension, the students will have the high score in listening comprehension. However, it is not exactly true. Many factors give influence to the students listening task achievement. It is not merely about the experience but it deals with many aspects, such as the material, listener, speaker, physical setting, concentration level, etc. all of these factors that give influence to the students' listening result.

CONCLUSION

The research result can be concluded as follows:

1. The majority of the students (83.33%) has the average level of the students' perception toward listening.
2. Listening becomes the lowest rating in the students' performance among writing, reading, and speaking.
3. The students' perception of the benefit of listening can be identified into some aspects, such as: the students' belief that listening is important, the students' belief that listening comprehension is difficult, the students' belief that listening comprehension is boring and not

interesting, the students' belief that listening comprehension is exciting, the students sufficient training in English listening comprehension during their school, and the experience related to the listening strategies.

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