



Students' Perception of Listening Materials at University

Suharti Siradjuddin¹, Muhammad Yahrif²

suhartisiradjuddin772@gmail.com, muhyahrif@gmail.com

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Megarezki University, Makassar, Indonesia

Received: 27 July 2021 Accepted: 15 December 2021

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v9i2.1998

Abstract

The aims of this study are to assess students' perception of listening materials used in the listening class of the English education program at the Megarezky University of Makassar. Students' perception of the use of listening materials is beneficial in order to understand and improve listening material especially in the English education program at the Megarezky University of Makassar. This researcher was used a qualitative approach to collect data through questionnaires and interviews. The participants of this research were 10 students of the English education program in the 2020/2021 academic year. The technique of analysis covers students' perception related to the general perception of listening material that they received in the first and second semester in listening courses. The finding indicated students have positive opinions of the listening materials used in class. However, there were some positive feedbacks and some potential problems with the use of listening materials. All these perceptions of the listening materials can imply the improvement of better listening materials in the future.

Keywords: listening materials; perception; university students

Introduction

Listening skills are important for the acquisition of language, this is supported by some researchers such as Hedge (2000) found that up to 45% of one's communication time is spent on listening activities, while Chen (2011) estimates that 50% of an adult's communication consists of listening. It is thus clear that one spends much more time on listening communication activities than on the rest of the language skills (i.e., reading, writing, and speaking). With regard to English as a second language (EFL), Nunan (2015, p.34) states that 'listening is the gasoline in the engine of second language acquisition,' acknowledging that listening is an essential factor in the early stages of the language learning process that occurs before other skills such as speaking and writing, which are known as productive skills.

Although much ground-breaking work on the teaching of listening in second and foreign languages has been done, it is still one of the skills that receive little attention in many classes which is a challenge for learners in the classroom and beyond (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). This crucial factor of learning a language is similar to the process for acquiring the mother language, where babies develop their listening skills through the language that their mothers produce. As stated by Azarnoosh et al. (2016), listening is part of the natural approach to acquiring a first language. Due to the important part played by listening skills for learning a language, this study examines listening skills with regard to learners of English as a second language. The participants for this study are the second-semester students of the English education department at Megarezky University (UNIMERZ) educational institution in Makassar, Indonesia.

Megarezky University is a non-government educational institution for undergraduate programs in Makassar. This institution consists of three faculties, one of the faculty is faculty of teaching and education. This faculty focuses on lecturer training, with four study programs: sports health and recreation, English education, elementary education, and sociology of education. The focus of this study is on the English education program. In the English education program, the listening skill is one of the compulsory components of the curriculum. This skill is taught in two semesters; the first-semester course is 'listening comprehension' and the second-semester course is 'listening interpretive', each of which has a weighting of two credits. The requirement of this program is that students must pass the 'listening comprehension' course in the first semester to be eligible to take the 'listening interpretive' course in the second semester. Both courses are taught by the same lecturer.

Through informal conversations with English education students at Megarezky University, it was found that students often find the listening course difficult. Some students stated that they found it difficult to understand the audio recordings, or they were not able to hear any information in the recordings, or they became bored.

For this study, the listening materials were chosen for investigation as they are considered an urgent issue and a suitable starting point for an in-depth analysis of the listening course at Megarezky University. The primary aim of this research is to find potential issues with the listening materials used at Megarezky University, from the students' perspective. The following research questions of this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of the students regarding the listening materials used in the English education study program at Megarezky University?
2. What are students' expectations of listening materials?

Elvrin Septyanti (2019) provided the preceding analysis. Titled "Students' Perception of Listening Lesson at University of Riau." The disparity between Elvrin Septyanti's research and this study was discovered. Differences between Elvrin Septyanti and this research. The first, the feedback of listening proficiency criteria set by the lecturer at 68%. The second, the desire for progress in the media and applications in hearing lessons that comprise educational content are among the students' impressions of listening lessons. meanwhile, this research found some positive feedbacks and some potential problems with the use of listening materials. All these perceptions of the listening materials can imply the improvement of better listening materials in the future.

METHOD

The method of this study was a qualitative approach with several sources of data collection. The data collection source was a questionnaire, with interviews adding to the data. The data collection methods ensured the researcher elicited adequate data to investigate the research question in depth. This research was held at the Megarezky University of Makassar with a focus on the second semester of the English education study program. The participants of this research were English education students who had completed the listening course in the first semester. There were 20 students of English education who were enrolled in the 2018/2019 academic year, but 10 students were chosen to be participants in this research. These students had completed the listening course in the second semester, and there

was one class of the English education program at the time of this study. The data were analyzed using thematic data analysis which is based on grounded theory.

Results

The findings are organized and analyzed into two main groups: First, students' perception of the listening materials will cover three points of view students' general perception of listening materials, students' perception of listening materials in the first semester, and students' perception of listening materials in the second semester. Second, students' expectations about listening material.

1. Students' Perception of the Listening Materials

1.1 Students General Perception of the Use of Listening Materials

From the result of the survey about the general perception of listening materials, it was indicated that students show positive perspectives about the use of listening materials. This positive statement can be seen from one of the student below:

'Yes, I love it because it sounds interesting and can motivate me to learn English' (Student 4).

The response from this student indicated that the use of listening material, in general, made them motivated to learn English. At the same time, the listening material that lectures used in listening class can activate student's curiosity with the statement 'because it sounds interesting. This 'interesting' statement is in line with Light brown and Spada (2013) about second language learners can motivate if learners have shown interest or like towards the speakers of the language. For this matter, the sound that they hear from the audio which comes from the native speaker can stimulate them to love the language because they interest to speak like a native speaker. This is supported by Gardner's (cited in Dornyei, 2001) description of 'integrative orientation' which states that if students show a positive attitude in L2, they will more easily succeed in their language learning.

Another positive response comes from this student below, but at the same time that she admitted that she has limitations to understand the whole content of the listening material.

'I like, especially if I use headphones, it seems I can hear native speakers directly. Especially the way they pronounce even though I am still struggling with unclear pronunciation'. (Student 10).

Even though she found it difficult to understand the listening material, but This student showed a positive attitude. She tried to emphasize by using tools especially headphones can help her to catch information from listening materials. She also believed that the listening material helped her to increase their skill in recognizing pronounced words when listening. This is indicated that the listening material successfully increases other skills in English especially pronunciation.

An opposing point of view, from another positive response, comes from a student's statement down below:

'I find it difficult to understand especially the unclear pronunciation, that is why I do not really like it' (Student 3).

A strong statement of rejection from this student because of unclear pronunciation might be because of external factors, like students' statements down below.

'I hear the conversation through the headset and sometimes it is unclear' (Student 8).

'It is difficult to understand word by word especially if it comes from the sound system' (Student 9).

the students' perspectives regarding their difficulty with listening varied but the main complaint were the speed of spoken English and unclear pronunciation.

The above quotes suggested that lack of vocabulary and difficulty distinguishing between similar sounds may not be the only factors causing difficulty for students when listening to spoken English. It appears that the quality of the sound system in this class may be adding to the problem. As noted previously, the sound system is an essential tool in the listening class, thus the poor quality of sound system devices will hinder the students' learning. This is related to Underwood's (cited in Zaenuri 2015, p. 126) practical list of listening material, the first item of which states 'the recording is really clear, not just for one person to listen to but for use in a large class'. The sound system that the lecturer provides in the listening class must be available not only for personal purposes but also for the entire class and the quality of the sound system must ensure no noise distraction.

In addition, another possible explanation of the students' problem in the listening

class relates to Goh's (2000, p. 61) suggestion that students 'do not recognize words they know. Students need time to process spoken English and may be unable to immediately recall the meaning. This slow recognition may be due to sounds being joined, which made the listening process difficult.

As suggested by Goh with regard to students' listening problems, there are three potential reasons for the student's difficulties with listening to English in the class. First, the slow recognition between sounds and the student's long-term memory; second, undeveloped vocabularies required for listening; and third, the word-referent relationship may not be automatized. These three potential problems in listening were identified that appeared in students of Megarezky University.

In summary, the positive responses from some students demonstrated that the students were generally satisfied with the listening materials available in the class. These positive attitudes may increase students' chances of high achievement in learning English, as noted by Agustina 2017, Brown and Hirschfeld 2008, Cakir and Solak 2015, and Syukur 2016, who found a positive correlation between attitudes and students' performance in learning. However, there are other issues relating to listening skills that make learning ESL difficult for students especially unable to recognize a word with similar pronunciation but different meanings.

1.2 Students' Perception of the Listening Materials in the First Semester

The students were asked about their perception of the listening materials that were used in the first semester. Specifically, the lecturer used the Top-Up Listening 1 by Cleary, Holden, and Cooney which was published in 2003 as the main source of listening material. All students responded favorably with regard to this listening material, as the example below:

'It is pretty good, it does not make it difficult for students to understand the lesson, and this is good for students who are just learning English/beginner' (Student 2).

The positive response from all students indicates that they satisfy with the used of listening materials in the first semester, it indicates that student is able to reach their target of listening comprehension. However, there is an indication that the listening materials that they used in semester 1 are too easy for them, as the students stated above that it is suitable for beginner level, which some of the students might be unmotivated because the listening material is too easy for them. The challenge factor is ignored by a lecture by providing easy listening materials

might be because of the students in semester one. The general perception of students' ability in semester one might hinder the lecturer to identified students' abilities.

Another positive response relating to the English materials in the first semester is:

'It very helps to improve our English skill' (Student 3).

The above suggested that the material in the first semester made it easy for learners but they may be unsuitable for learners in higher education. Zaenuri (2015) noted that it is necessary to provide content that is appropriate for the level of the learners. If the content is not at an appropriate level, this could affect the students' motivation. The content of the materials should not be too easy because this may lead to boredom, but neither should it be too difficult because this may lead to a lack of motivation.

However, another participant attempted to compare with the listening materials that he received from the first and second semesters. He stated that:

'In the first semester, I quite understand but in the second semester, it is very difficult. I cannot understand' (Student 4)

It indicates that students can accept listening material in the first semester but get a strong rejection for the listening material in the second semester.

1.3 Students' Perception of the Listening Materials in the Second Semester

In line with the above statement, it attempts to compare with listening material in the first and second semesters. In this part, the participant asked in detail about their perception of listening material in the second semester. It found that students are more favorable to listening materials in the first semester rather than in the second semester. Some negative comments about the second semester are stated by students down below. The questionnaire responses showed that most students were unhappy about the materials used in the second semester, stating that the use of teaching English as a second language (TOEFL) materials hinders them in learning listening because the material is too difficult. One student stated:

'I could not understand TOEFL materials in the second semester (Student 7).

The above indicates that the student was unable to understand the listening material especially TOEFL material in semester two. In addition to the student

statement of the difficulty of listening material in semester two is
‘TOEFL material is very difficult to understand’ (Student 4).

This indicates that the student blamed the material for their performance and loses their motivation to learn because the material is too difficult. It also indicates that the students' ability cannot cope with this listening material.

Even though some students expressed dissatisfaction with the TOEFL material in the second semester, other students expressed positive attitudes; for example: ‘It will help us especially if we take TOEFL test’ (Student 3). Another student provided a positive response:

I think TOEFL listening material is very good and important for students to increase their English ability especially, for students who want to continue their study overseas (Student 2).

The above responses from students indicated that they had a positive impression of this material and believed that it will provide them with the opportunity to study overseas. This relates to the 'instrumental orientation' noted by Gardner (cited in Dornyei 2001, p. 49) which relates to achieving a goal for their own satisfaction. In this case, getting a scholarship and studying overseas are the goals that motivate the students.

2. Students' Expectation of the Listening Materials

From the student's point of, most students believed that variation of listening materials is strongly recommended to avoid some boredom in learning. The additional materials that they suggest available in listening class are, watching English movies, dialog, and storytelling. Such as this student commented:

‘I hope additional listening materials such as English song in listening class which can increase students' ability in listening English’ (Student 2).

Yet another student stated: ‘I hope I can learn these materials, so my English ability can improve’ (Student 1).

Other comments received by the students related to their expectations about how the lecturer should deliver her lesson in listening class:

‘I think the lecture should teach the practical approach to improve students listening’ (Student 7).

Another statement from the student is that they are willing to get motivation.

'She stated that motivation from lecturer to keep maintain her motivation in learning English' (Student 6).

In summary, students expect some variation in listening materials rather than monotonous activities. Some online resources can solve this issue related to the listening material. At the same time, they also hope lecture to teach them some skill to acquire listening and share them some motivation words due to acquiring the listening skill

Discussion

This section deals with the interpretation of the findings based on the result of data gained from open-ended questionnaires and interviews. It is presented in two-part: First, students' perception of the listening materials, and Second, students' expectations.

1. Students' Perception of the Listening Materials

Based on the findings obtained during the research, it can be stated that one positive finding of this study is students value the listening materials that they are given in their listening classes. Almost all students had positive attitudes towards the use of listening materials. It means they show some positive attitude in learning. They are reported being excited about the listening materials which helped them to learn English better and can motivate them.

However, the selection of listening materials is also essential for students' success in learning. As Underwood (cited in Zaenuri 2015, p.126) suggested for selecting listening to materials content should be suitable of student's age, ability, and needs. In addition, he also stated that if all the criteria of these materials fulfill, the learners will feel motivated and excited to follow the lesson.

In line with the above statement, the result from findings that listening materials used in the first and second semester tend to avoid the criteria from Underwood; students' age, ability, and needs. This reason is that listening materials in the first semester tend to be easy while in the second semester, the listening material is more difficult for students. It indicates that the content of listening materials in the first and second semesters is not based on students' ability and students' needs categories. As Zaenuri (2015, p. 126) stated, 'selecting materials which is suit students' need and applicable for all students is not easy because the appropriateness of the materials should be based on the learners need'.

Another aspect that appeared from findings is that the unclear pronunciation comes from several factors, internal or external factors. The external factor might

come from the poor quality of the sound system, audio recording, or tools that the lecturer used in listening class. It might come from the internal actor or from an external factor. The internal factor might come from the students themselves, the low ability of students in English can cause students are difficulty receiving the information from audio. For example, lack of ability in vocabulary as Goh (2000) stated that underdeveloped listening vocabularies might hinder students to understand the listening materials that they are given to them. Underdeveloped listening vocabulary according to Goh (2000) is also one of factor might hinder students to receive listening content. This is because some students in the EFL context might focus on memorizing new vocabulary rather than they learn the word sounds.

As noted by Goh (2000, p. 61), one of the most common problems with listening faced by that student is the 'fundamental aspect of comprehension'. This relates to the fact that some words sound familiar to, or exactly the same as, others which makes it difficult to immediately recall the meaning. As a result, learners may fail to process the sound into meaningful messages, which is in line with Student's statement regarding unclear pronunciation. It is possible that the student could have understood certain words if they had been written but they could not understand those words when spoken.

2. Students' expectation of listening materials

In this part, student's expectations of listening materials stated that students highlight their expectations regarding the listening materials. In terms of additional listening materials, students suggested using such as English songs and movies and believed can increase their motivation in learning rather than using other listening materials.

In line with students' belief in used movies and songs, Brown (cited in Azarnoosh, p.77) stated the use of this listening material can categorize as 'extensive learning', which students increase their global understanding through this media. Use of this material such as movie can use as multi-purposes. Is not only for listening material purposes, pronunciation but also learning culture. That is the way Brown recommended this type of listening materials are used to support learners at the intermediate and advanced levels, which students in higher education are suitable for it.

However, providing some entertainment media might not be the only way to enrich listening materials. Other materials such as expert speech videos, podcasts, the news might be other options for listening materials. The combination of these

two types of listening materials is believed can solve and complete the content of the listening material. Providing entertainment area in listening material to engage students in listening, while in the education area is to achieve target language in listening.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the analysis, the researcher formulates the conclusion that:

1. A positive attitude has been shown by students at English Education program in the 2020/2021 academic year toward listening materials in general. However, some students find it difficult to cope with the lesson because of external and internal factors.
2. Students' internal factors come from students themselves, lack ability of English proficiency. While external factors include the quality of equipment during the listening process.
3. The material in the second semester tends to be more difficult than material in the first semester.
4. The listening material in the first semester tends too easy for students.

There are some solutions to address these potential issues.

1. Variation and additional resources in listening materials are suggested by students to enrich students' material in the future. The use of online resources such as listening websites, online radio programs, podcasts, English songs, and videos from expert speakers (TED Talks).
2. Motivation from the lecturer in every English course is essential to keep maintain their motor learning.
3. Renewable listening material is recommended especially for listening material in the first semester because the listening materials that they used is out of date since it was published

References

Agustina, L.(2017). Enhancing the students' positive attitude in learning Business English by using technology. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*,

8(6), 51-57.

- Azarnoosh, M., Pische MZ., Faravani, A., & Kargozari, HR. (2016). *Issues in materials development*. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Brown, GT., & Hirschfeld, GH. (2008). Students' conceptions of assessment: Links to outcomes Assessment in Education: Principles. *Policy & Practice*, 15(1), 3-17.
- Cakir, R., & Solak, E. (2015). The attitude of Turkish EFL Learners towards e-Learning through Tam Model. *Procedia – Social Behavioral Sciences*, 176(C), 596-601.
- Chen, H. 2011. Brief analysis of strategies to improve English listening comprehension competence among non-English undergraduate students. *Asian Social Science*, 7 (12):68-71.
- Cleary, C., Holden, B., & Cooney T. 2003. Top-Up listening. Abax.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivation to learn a foreign/second language*. Longman, Harlow, 46-100.
- Goh, CM. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems. *System*, 28(1), 55-75.
- Hedge, T. 2000. *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lighbown, PM & Spada, N. 2013. *How Languages are learned*. Oxford University Press. United Kingdom.
- Syukur, A. (2016), Encouraging students to have positive attitudes toward learning English, *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 3(2), 122-130.
- Vandergrift, L & Goh, C. 2012. *Teaching and learning second language listening: Met cognition in action*. New York: Taylor & Frances Group.
- Zaenuri, M. (2015). A Model of EFL Listening Materials Development. *Indonesian EFL Journal: Journal of ELT*, 1(2), 119-130.