

Listening Strategies Employed by the Students at the Tertiary Level in EFL Setting

Asep Hardiyanto

Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi
asep.hardiyanto@umko.ac.id

Mutia Tanjung

Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi
Mutiatanjung97@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this research is to investigate the listening strategies employed by the students at the tertiary level in EFL setting. The current study used descriptive approach which involved six students. They are the representative from the low, medium and high ability students. To achieve the objective of this research, the researchers used interview guideline as the instrument to collect the data. The findings showed that from those six strategies, there were only five strategies which are employed by the students; namely social strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy and affective strategy. From the result of this research, it can be concluded that memory strategy is not employed by the students.

Key Words: Listening strategy, Listening Comprehension, Listening Ability

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is important when the listeners need to gain the message from the speaker. Without comprehension, the listeners will not understand well that the speakers are saying. The listener cannot do if she/ he does not listen carefully, concentrate on and pay attention to what the speaker said. Comprehension is a main part of listening skill since comprehension is understanding message deeply. While listening something, listener needs to acquire the message well. According to Magnera in Elfi (2016:218), listening comprehension refers to the understanding of the implications and explicit meanings of words and sentences of spoken language.

Listening comprehension is necessary to understand for the students. According to Fang (2008:21) listening comprehension means that the listeners should be encouraged to concentrate on an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but their non linguistic knowledge as well. Students should also know that not every clue is equally important

to the message. Therefore, even when they miss a piece of language, they should not worry there is a good chance to understand the message from other clues. In addition, Rost in Hamouda (2013:117) explained listening comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners are involved in constructing meaning. Listeners comprehend the oral input through sound discrimination, grammatical structures, background knowledge, stress and intonation, and other linguistic or non linguistic clues. Thus, listeners need to concentrate with what they heard.

From the definition above, it can be concluded that listening comprehension is the ability to understand what speakers are saying. It is the active process to get the implicit and explicit meaning both linguistic and non linguistic knowledge.

1. Listening Strategies

In order to face difficulties in listening, every listener should be good at choosing the right strategies to overcome the difficulties. There are some strategies mentioned by some experts that can be applied to overcome listening difficulties. Vandergrift in Bingol (2016:2) claims that strategy development is important for listening training because through strategies, learners can guide and evaluate their own responses and comprehension. Weinstein and Mayer in Huy (2015:24) also propose that listening strategies are thoughts and behaviors that engaged by listener during listening that are intended to influence the listening encoding processing. In addition, Rubin in Huy (2015:24) indicates that listening strategies are activities or techniques that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of the listening input.

Listening strategies are the ways which makes listening comprehension successful. Strategies are considered to be the ways in which learner manage a task or face some problems, learners also can be taught effective ways of managing and approaching their listening. According to Oxford in Huy (2015:24) there are six strategies that can help learners effectively in doing listening comprehension.

Table 1
OXFORD’S LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY SPECIFICATION

Direct strategies:	
1. Memory strategies	- Creating mental linkages - Applying images and sounds - Reviewing well
2. Cognitive strategies	- Employing action - Practising - Receiving and sending messages - Analysing and reasoning
3. Compensation strategies	- Creating structure for input and output - Guessing intelligently - Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
Indirect strategies:	
1. Metacognitive strategies	- Centring your learning - Arranging and planning your learning - Evaluating your learning
2. Affective strategies	- Lowering your anxiety - Encouraging yourself - Taking your emotional temperature
3. Social strategies	- Asking questions - Cooperating with others - Empathising with others

(Oxford, 1990:

1. Memory Strategies

Indrianty and Kemala (2017:18) stated that memory is a part of direct learning strategy where the retrieval and storage of new information are the two key functions of memory strategy. Also Kassem in Tham et al (2019:117) said that memory strategies significantly contribute to listeners' good listening comprehension ability as they help restore and retrieve the heard information. Memory strategies were used to enter new information into memory storage and retrieving the information to help learners be able to link one concept or item with other. The words and phrases could be associated with the visual images that can be retrieved and stored for communication. Many learners make use of visual images, but some also find it easy to connect words and phrases with sound, touch or motion (Samida, 2012:2). Memory strategy categorized into four sets: *creating mental linkage, applying images and sound, employing action and reviewing well* (Oxford, 1990:18). Specifically, the creating mental linkage includes two specific strategies associating and semantic mapping. In associating, learners could link what they know what they hear, and they know how to connect sound and picture to remember words with grouping use. Meanwhile, semantic mapping used to help learners to remember the location of the words when listening in their mind.

2. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategy used to help learners to understand language system and to obtain knowledge. According to Ellis in Tham et al (2019:119) cognitive strategies are perceptions that listeners use to solve listening tasks, synthesizing and transforming information or input they receive and, involving analyzing. Cognitive strategies could help learners to produce and understand new language (Indrianty and Kemala, 2017:18). In the example, learners can understand the meaning of words from context with link the new information with existing schema.

Cognitive strategies are classified into four sets: *practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output* (Oxford, 1990:19). First set (practicing) consisting of two strategies: recognizing and using formulas and patterns, and repeating. In repeating strategy it could help learner facilitate the retrieval of appropriate information from their long term memory so they can repeat information also recognize familiar patterns and use them for guessing the meaning. Second set (sending and receiving message) could help learners get the idea quickly by focusing on the main ideas and detail ideas while listening.

Third set (analyzing and reasoning strategies) used to construct words or compare and contrast words or expression between the native language and the target language to make listening learning easier. This set also pointed three related strategies: translating, analyzing contrastively, and transferring to help learners use words, structures or concepts from learner's primary language to understand the target language. Last set (creating structure for input and output) including two strategies; note taking and summarizing, it helps learners synthesize what they hear to facilitate the retention of information. In taking notes strategy, learners can write

down what they hear then summarize on their notes to help them understand easily (Oxford, 1990:19).

3. Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies could help learners make up the missing knowledge when they do not hear something clearly. Learners could guess the meaning when they do not know new words and expressions (Samida, 2012:3). Therefore, compensation strategies are considered as a tool for ‘guessing intelligently’ because learners could guess meaning of words or pieces of information by using clues without listening to every word. There are two specific strategies in compensation strategies: *using linguistic clues and other clues* (Oxford, 1990:19). Using linguistic clues including word order and word stress which could help listeners understand the unfamiliar words. While in other clues listeners could use situational context and background noise to guess what is going on. For example a listener guessing based on partial knowledge by recognizes the words shovel, mower, and grass in a conversation could be understood about gardening.

4. Metacognitive Strategies

According to Vandergrift in Tham et al (2019:121) this strategy play vital role in facilitating the learners’ language learning as it helps them oversee, regulate or direct the language learning processes. Metacognitive strategies divided into three sets: *centering learning (paying attention) arranging and planning plan, and evaluating learning* (Oxford, 1990:20). Centering learning aimed to give a focus to the learner so the attention could be directed toward certain language activities. Arranging and planning plan is used to help learners to recognize so they could get the benefit from their effort and energy. Evaluating learners help learners in monitoring errors and evaluation of progress. In example for arranging and planning, learner who wants to listen to the news can plan to determine what topics might be covered in the program. Learners could look up the words related to the topic before listening to the news as a preparation.

5. Affective Strategies

Samida (2012:4) stated that affective strategy aimed to help students gaining control over their emotions, motivations, attitudes, and values. This strategy associated with learners’ emotional enhancement such as persistence and confidence which helps learners to involve themselves actively in language learning, and lowering anxiety levels by laughing at their own mistakes in a typical example (Alhaysony in Tham, 2019:122). There are three sets in affective strategies: *lowering listeners’ anxiety, encouraging themselves, and taking their emotional temperature* (Oxford, 1990:21). First strategy lowering listeners’ anxiety by using progressive relaxation enables listeners to keep calm while listening. Second is encouraging themselves by making positive statement to help listeners increase their confidence in finishing a listening task. Last, in taking their emotional temperature there are two specific listening strategies; listening to the body and discussing with someone. Those could help learners recognize their feelings and exchange their feelings with friends. For example, listener tries to listens their favorite music before practicing.

6. Social Strategies

Social strategies may help listeners understand the target language as well as the language and work together. This situation is in line with Widowson in Indrianty and Kemala (2017:18) who say people are actively engaged with what is going to be talked and they are participating in the activity. Social strategies consist of two strategies: *asking for question and cooperating with each other* (Oxford, 1990:21). In particular, asking for question could help learners clarify what they are not clear about by asking their teacher or friends. While, cooperating with each other by cooperating with peers could help learners share information and check comprehension or to solve the question together.

METHOD

This research belongs to a descriptive qualitative research with case study approach which the researcher applied an open-ended interview for collecting the data and used interview guideline as the research instrument to analyze students' listening strategies in overcoming the listening difficulties. The research subjects were six students in three different ability level: low ability, moderate ability and high ability level which selected by the final result of their study in third semester.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher asked six respondents about their strategies after the respondents shared their difficulties in learning listening. The strategies in dealing with problems were important because it aimed to improve and increased the students' listening skills. The strategies came from the students themselves. Based on the research findings of the research, the researcher found that there are five from six strategies used by the respondents to overcome the problem.

The most common strategy used by the respondents is the Social and Cognitive strategies. In the social strategy, all respondents claimed that they used this strategy by asking the lecturer or exchange information with friends. They usually asked their friends or in a group to discuss the difficulties they had, also they asked the lecturer for clearer and accurate information. Both asking lecturer and exchange information with friends used by all of the respondents in low, moderate and high ability level to overcome their problem in listening comprehension. Three of six students in each level tried to ask their lecturer and also the rest three students ask their friends dealing with difficulty they had.

In the cognitive strategy, mostly the respondents try to write notes before giving an answer and translate some words. In high ability level students only one who tried to write on their notes, in moderate ability level students both two students used note to help them and for low ability level students only one who use notes to help them. They try to write down the unfamiliar words they heard even in the wrong spelling they kept writing on their notes so they still could keep moving without afraid of some missing words.

In the compensation strategy, the three of six respondents made guesses if they do not know or do not understand the familiar word or what the speakers are talking about. Also one of them

used the situational context (e.g noises, speaker's voice) to understand the spoken text. One student from high ability level and low ability level tried to make guesses to face their difficulty while in moderate ability level both two students did not try to make guesses. Dealing with using the situational context, only one student from moderate ability level used the situational context to help her facing the difficulty.

Through metacognitive strategy, the respondents try to give their best to pay their attention to the speaker or the information needed. Two students in high ability level, they tried to keep focus even sometimes they still lose their concentration. Then one of student in low ability level also try to keep focus with what she heard. While in moderate ability level none of two students used this strategy. For the affective strategy, respondents try to keep themselves calm and not be nervous when they had difficulties in listening to the audio or the material given by the lecturer. One student in each ability level; high, moderate and low tried to keep calm and control themselves to overcome their difficulties.

Memory strategies are the least strategy or be a strategy that students do not use to overcome their difficulties. This strategy involves meaning of words and students are often troubled with remembering vocabulary. Oxford (1999:40) states that memory strategy is rarely used by the students and they are unaware of doing it. The same findings are shown on this research there are no students which analyzed using this strategy.

To sum up, based on the interview to overcome the difficulties, all the respondents used more than one strategy in listening comprehension. In each level or ability students, they used almost all of the strategies. In the low ability level students, they used write note in cognitive strategy, make guesses in compensation strategy, keep focus in metacognitive strategy, keep calm in affective strategy and ask lecturer or friends in social strategy. While in moderate ability level students, in cognitive strategy they used write note, in compensation strategy they used the situational context, in affective strategy they try to keep calm, and in the social strategy they chose to ask lecturer or friends. In the moderate ability level, they do not used any kind of metacognitive strategy. Last, for the high ability level students, the respondents used the same strategies with low ability level students. They used write note, make guesses, keep focus, keep calm and they could ask lecturer or shared with friends. In low, moderate and high ability level students, the respondents did not use memory strategy to overcome the difficulties in learning listening comprehension.

According to the result of the interview, the common used strategy among students is social strategy. In general, almost all participants used the listening strategies to facilitate their listening comprehension process, and there was a considerable difference in the frequency of using the listening strategies frequently while listening. The students considered that social strategy in which learners asked lecturers or friends to clarify what they did not understand during the listening process. After listening, they exchanged information with their friends or cooperated to check comprehension and answered all questions. Likewise, cognitive strategies were favorably used by many students. Cognitive strategies played an important part in improving learners' understanding and knowledge of linguistic system and helping learners to develop the thinking skills. Then the following strategies used by some students were the metacognitive, affective and compensation strategy. Contrary to the aforementioned strategies, a great part of the respondents

did not use memory strategies such as activating their background knowledge to store the just-heard information. This result in line with the result of previous research done by Tham et al (2019) showed that cognitive strategy became the frequent used strategy in their research, followed by social strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and the least was memory strategy.

Contrary with the result, the previous study done by Fauzana (2016) showed that memory strategy became the most frequently used strategy and the social strategy as the least strategy. These contrary made the researcher think that not all of students used same strategy to overcome their problems. They used or create their own strategy by themselves in their study in order to help them facing up the difficulties in learning listening comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The listening strategies used by the low, moderate and high ability students were cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. In cognitive strategy they use writing note as the strategy to overcome listening difficulties, in compensation strategy they tend to use situational context and make guesses, in metacognitive strategy they use to be focus, in affective strategy they try to keep calm and in the social strategy they used to ask lecturer or exchange with friends in order to overcome listening difficulties.

Six students from each level are found to use same strategies except in the moderate level students, in compensation strategy they use situational context while the students in low and high ability levels tend to make guesses. Also they do not use any strategy in metacognitive to overcome listening difficulties.

The findings are expected to be beneficial for teacher to help students using the right strategies with the right tasks. It is also served as guideline for teachers who would like to provide strategy in English listening process. This research also hoped can give insight for language learner to use the suitable strategy or ways to improve their listening skill and hoped this research could be the reference for the future research.

REFERENCES

- Bingol, B. Celik, N. Yildiz and C. Tugrul Mart. 2014. Listening Comprehension Difficulties Encountered by Students in Second Language Learning Class. Vol.2 (1): 1-6. Available:<http://www.wjeis.org/FileUpload/ds217232/File/01b.bingol.pdf> (May, 3rd 2019)
- Elfi. 2016. Scrutinizing Students' Listening Strategies: Creating Mental Linkages. In *ISET Journal*. Vol. 4 (1): 217-255. Available: <http://ejournal.unp.ac.id/index.php/selt/article/view/6931/5465> (August, 15th 2019)
- Fang, X. 2008. Listening Comprehension in EFL Teaching. *US-China Foreign Language Publisher*. Vol. 6 (1): 21-29. Available:<https://www.slideshare.net/mora-deyanira/listening-comprehension-in-efl-teaching> (August, 21st 2019)

- Fauzana, R. 2016. An investigation of English Listening Strategies. In *Indonesian Journal of Integrated English Language Teaching*. Vol. 2 (1): 31-36. Available: <http://ejournal.uinsuska.ac.id/index.php/IJIELT/article/viewFile/2364/1480> (March, 11th 2020)
- Hamouda. A. 2013. An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Problems Encountered by Saudi Students in the EL Listening Classroom. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*. Vol. 2 (2): 114-155 Available: <http://hrmars.com/admin/pics/1882.pdf> (May, 2nd 2019)
- Huy, L.H. 2015. An Investigation into Listening Strategies of EFL Students within the High School Setting. In *Asian Journal of Educational Research*. Vol. 3 (4): 21-34. Available: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f41a/f8ca24be26a3193a89dd50dacca1fb8427de.pdf> (August, 15th 2019)
- Indrianty, S., and Z. Kemala. 2017. Listening Strategies Used by the Students in Improving Listening Skill (A Case Study at Stiepar Language Center). In *Jurnal SORA*. Vol. 2(1): 9-21. Available: http://jurnalsora.stba.ac.id/index.php/jurnal_sora/article/view/9 (March, 23rd 2020)
- Nunan, David. 2015. *Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages*. New York: Routledge.
- Oxford, R.L. 1990. *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Samida, D. K. 2012. Language Learning Strategies. In *TESOL Journal*. 1-6. Available: <http://mbdm.ir/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/MRP-MAJOR-ENGL-2013-18577-PAPER.pdf> (March, 23rd 2020)
- Tham, D. M., T.T.H. Trang and T. Q. Thao. 2019. Eleventh Graders' Actual Use of English Listening Learning Strategies at Duong Van Duong High School. In *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*. Vol. 35 (1): 114-130. Available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332036078_ELEVENTH_GRADERS'_ACTUAL_USE_OF_ENGLISH_LISTENING_LEARNING_STRATEGIES_AT_DUONG_VAN_DUONG_HIGH_SCHOOL (March, 11th 2020)