

Students' Perceptions of Listening Strategies in EFL Classrooms: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Mendengarkan merupakan keterampilan dasar yang harus dikuasai oleh pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Tanpa kemampuan mendengarkan yang memadai, siswa cenderung sering mengalami kesalahpahaman dan mengandalkan asumsi yang tidak pasti. Namun, mengembangkan keterampilan mendengarkan yang efektif seringkali menimbulkan tantangan bagi pembelajar EFL karena berbagai faktor. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dan mendeskripsikan persepsi mahasiswa tentang strategi mendengarkan di kelas. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dari Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, angkatan 2021, yang meraih nilai tertinggi dalam mata kuliah mendengarkan. Peserta dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola yang berulang dan memberikan penjelasan interpretatif tentang fenomena tersebut. Temuan ini

menyoroti efektivitas pencatatan sebagai sarana pengorganisasian informasi dan manfaat strategi jeda dan ulangi dalam memperjelas pemahaman. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penerapan strategi mendengarkan dalam konteks kelas sangat efektif, karena penggunaan pemrosesan bottom-up dan top-down oleh guru memfasilitasi pemahaman siswa terhadap materi pelajaran melalui beragam proses kognitif. Studi ini merekomendasikan agar para pendidik menerapkan strategi-strategi ini untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran mendengarkan, sementara peneliti di masa mendatang didorong untuk menyelidiki lebih lanjut penerapannya dalam konteks yang lebih luas.

ABSTRACT

Listening is a fundamental skill that learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) must master. Without adequate listening proficiency, students are likely to experience frequent misunderstandings and rely on uncertain assumptions. However, developing effective listening skills often poses challenges for EFL learners due to various factors. This study aims to explore and describe students' perceptions of listening strategies in the classroom. Employing a qualitative design, the research involved English Education students from Gorontalo State University, class of 2021, who achieved the highest scores in listening courses. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and provide an interpretive account of the phenomena. The findings highlight the effectiveness of note-taking as a means of organizing information and the benefits of the pause-and-repeat strategy in clarifying comprehension. The study concludes that the implementation of listening strategies in classroom contexts is highly effective, as teachers' use of both bottom-up and top-down processing facilitates students' understanding of course materials through diverse cognitive processes. The study recommends that educators apply these strategies to enhance listening instruction, while future researchers are encouraged to further investigate their application in broader contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language definitely requires listening skills. Though it is quite important, the issues with listening have begun to be studied. In the order of frequency, Goh (2000) lists the most frequent problems students have when listening: quickly forgetting what is heard, not recognizing the words they know, understanding the message but not the intended message, ignoring the next part while considering meaning, and being able to create a mental picture from words heard. Children who practice listening comprehension may also have environmental problems. Students lose concentration and forget what they

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have heard before when they listen in loud surroundings. The reason for the hearing problem could also be the student's mental traits. This situation influences the students' listening comprehension.

Sometimes, the problem comes from the listener, who has poor listening skills, particularly when they hear a new term. They cannot connect the words and will want an explanation. Apart from that, the speaker is the most important person in listening. The audience cannot hear a word when the speaker cannot pronounce or spell a word. The results of listening comprehension are also influenced by the place, time, atmosphere, and tools used during the listening process (Sherly 2019).

Once they have taken listening classes in educational institutions, learners often encounter difficulties that impede their learning and make learning ineffective. Students with a low vocabulary in English find it challenging to understand the material provided since listening learning materials are delivered quickly, making it difficult for them to know what they are listening to or forget what they have done. Aside from the speed at which the material is presented, there is also an issue with the equipment lecturers use to help students in their listening comprehension. Frequently, these equipment—such as audio speakers—are cracked, making it difficult to hear the audio conversation when the audio material is played. This lowers their eagerness to learn, issues their ability to focus on the information they are listening to, and keeps them from giving vocal directions. Therefore, it is necessary to research students' perceptions of teachers' strategies for listening and learning.

Applying a learning strategy, such as a bottom-up processing method, to listening learning entails building meaning linearly from the smallest spoken language units to the largest units. Identify listeners who utilize bottom-up processing as those who deduce the meaning of the words in the text, according to O'Malley et al. (1989). By breaking down different sounds into words and then organizing them into a narrative whose meaning the pupils deduce, they may comprehend the subject. In contrast, top-down processing involves interpreting the speaker's intended meaning by using mental models, or "concepts," as a source of knowledge. According to O'Malley et al. (1989), listeners who successfully analyze and interpret texts utilizing schematic knowledge are those who commonly use top-down processing. In order to help students grasp the meaning of the content they wish to understand, this method is applied to listening learning even though the strategy is frequently employed without the students' knowledge. Students' comprehension is created in two separate ways.

Student perception towards teaching listening strategy is crucial for several reasons. First and foremost, students need to see the value in learning listening strategies to be more likely to put in the effort required to develop their listening skills. By understanding the benefits of various listening strategies, students are more likely to engage in activities designed to enhance their listening comprehension.

The objective of this research is "to investigate and describe students' perceptions of the teaching listening strategy in student English language education study program at state university Gorontalo". This study focuses on students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of lecturers' learning strategies in teaching listening skills courses. Researchers focused on the class of 2021 who had taken listening courses for academic purposes.

METHOD

This research employs qualitative methods. Qualitative research usually involves collecting data through interviews. This study used qualitative methods to comprehend a phenomenon within its natural social context to provide a more comprehensive image and data. The research employed a thematic approach as its qualitative method, according to Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a method of examining data that has been collected by experts with the goal of locating themes or patterns. Arnold (2006) states that thematic analysis is a technique for finding, examining, and summarizing patterns or themes in data. Researchers used an interview method to collect data with students majoring in English education class of 2021.

Purposive sampling was used in this research. According to Herdiansyah (2011), the purposive sampling technique involves researchers deliberately selecting specific research subjects and locations in order to examine or gain a better understanding of the core problem being researched. The research subjects and locations selected used purposive sampling according to the research objectives. Research participants were selected based on students who participated in listening learning for academic purposes. Participants were Gorontalo State University English education students from the class of 2021. Participants were selected based on predetermined criteria, namely having the highest score in listening to a listening subject for academic purposes, as proven by the 2022 SIAT results. This is because students with the highest results are better at analyzing data, challenging assumptions, and making conclusions, which enables them to offer helpful viewpoints for research.

To obtain the expected data to support the research, the researcher collected data used the following techniques: interview. An interview is a form of interpersonal communication when two individuals

exchange information by posing questions with a specific objective in mind. The order of the questions is typically established in advance, generally in writing form (Mulyana, 2002, p. 180). The researcher used an open, in-depth, unstructured interview format for the study. This technique is used to obtain data or information directly from sources regarding various matters related to research problems. This interview was conducted with pre-selected participants. The participants were asked several questions about their perception of listening strategy and how they experienced it.

To identify related patterns in a phenomenon and explain how it happens from the researcher's perspective, Thematic analysis is an especially useful method for research that seeks to comprehensively examine qualitative data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Information is arranged according to themes in the thematic analysis process, according to Hayes (in Indrayanti et al., 2008). In this instance, themes generate many data groups and relate to concepts and subjects found in material analysis. Different terms are used to describe the same theme; it happens in other situations, or different persons convey it.

The data that has been obtained employ analysed qualitatively and described based on themes. The stages of implementing thematic analysis from Hayes (in Indrayanti et al., 2008) are as follows:

- a. Prepare interview data for analysis
- b. Determine specific items that are relevant to the research subject.
- c. Analyze topics to look for similarities and classify
- d. Focus on each theme independently, and double-check whether each transcript of the interview answers has the same theme.
- e. Select related facts to show and report on each topic. Use all relevant material to build a final theme with category names, meanings, and supporting data.

RESULT

Perception interviews were conducted regarding the listening learning experiences of the English language education students of the class of 2021. The interview includes statements regarding the application of listening learning strategies carried out by the English students of the class of 2021. Using interviews conducted via the WhatsApp application, researchers categorized participant perspectives into several themes or problems based on student perceptions. The following is the explanation.

Note-taking strategy

Taking notes is one of the main materials from various platforms and sources, and lecturers can practice gathering information and relieve students from the burden of memorizing every detail. According to Meyers et al. (1991), students who take notes during lectures are more likely to be extremely concentrated and to emphasize key material over less relevant information. The foundation for managing personal information so that students can comprehend and retain what they learn in class is the capacity to take notes. When learning to listen in English, taking notes can aid in knowledge retention, which will assist students in comprehending the information presented in audio presentations.

According to interview data, learners' perspectives were gathered regarding how teachers utilise note-taking tactics to improve students' understanding during the listening learning process. Based upon the responses obtained from students during interviews with researchers, the following is their perspective on the desired outcomes of using note-taking as a learning method:

Yes, I think note-taking is quite helpful for me in understanding the material. By taking notes, I can study material by focusing on the essential parts I have noted rather than learning the entire material. – Participant 6

In my opinion, the use of note-taking is beneficial in the process of understanding the material. By taking notes, students can activate information processing, organize their thoughts, and create references that they can review again for better understanding. – Participant 7

According to the results of the previously discussed student interviews regarding their opinions of listening learning strategies, students can better comprehend the content of the lessons by organizing their thoughts and choosing which pertinent information to write about. Most students are able to look at their notes first, and if there is anything they don't understand, they can then seek out the meaning of what they wrote. Note-taking techniques can be used in a variety of educational settings, one of which is listening instruction. This is because taking notes is thought to be more adaptable and allows for reference-making for improved learning. Taking notes helps with taking in the information as well, particularly when marking crucial details throughout the listening-learning process. The note-taking technique used in listening instruction wraps up the audio content being presented so that comprehension of the content can be realized.

Pausing and repeating strategy

Students can use the "pause and repeat" method to review and clarify material covered in class. This participatory teaching approach repeats and pauses learning. It has been confirmed by Jacobs et al.

(1988) that pauses greatly increase students' comprehension. In the meantime, all students employ repeated listening as a comprehension approach, according to Cervantes and Gainer's (1992) theory. In order to employ this technique, the teacher gives the students advance notice, presents ideas or questions they should expect to hear during the listening lesson, plays the audio, and then stops to invite the students to reflect in writing by answering the questions. The teacher repeats the audio until the kids understand each question's solution. This is done nonstop until the audio ends.

Students' perspectives, as reported by researchers who spoke with students, focused on how teachers used techniques like pausing and repeating to help build up students' information. Students' opinions as they apply the pause and repeat learning approach are demonstrated by the following:

In my opinion, pausing and repeating is a good method because it ensures that all students can understand the audio and don't miss a beat. - Participant 8

The strategy of pausing and repeating in listening learning is more effective when done directly. With live presence, teachers can easily control students' speed and understanding and provide additional explanations or explanations when necessary. - Participant 9

In my opinion, pausing and repetition in listening learning is good, but not continuously because in listening, we are asked to listen and take in the conversation if repetition is the same as reading. - Participant 12. According to the findings of interviews with students who were asked to share their opinions about the use of the pause and repeat technique in listening instruction in the classroom, several students claimed that learning was more successful because the teacher could readily regulate the class's understanding and pace and offer further clarification or information as needed. A few participants suggested finding explanations and clarity could be achieved by repeating the process while pausing. This gives them more time to recognize audio or words that are difficult to hear. Because listening to the content is similar to reading it aloud and because inadvertent pauses can confuse the learning process, students believe that pausing and repeating should not be used constantly.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, most students' perceptions of the listening teaching strategy in the learning process are positive. Most participants gave the same perception of listening and learning strategies. They perceive that teachers use note-taking, pausing, and repeating strategies in listening learning.

Students' perceptions, according to Shidu (2003), are their opinions about anything happening in a class and are created with instructions or arguments for teachers or other students to improve their learning process. Interview data expresses students' opinions regarding the application of listening teaching strategies in the listening learning process in the classroom. Interview findings show that students prefer to discuss topics directly with the teacher because this strategy helps them learn to listen during the learning process. The contrasts in the answers students gave to the researchers show this. Students evaluate that it is simpler for them to understand the material offered during the learning process when teachers employ the listening learning strategy. The main goal of teacher strategy is to help students understand the subject they are studying.

The results show that elements influencing students' perceptions also form the basis of students' perceptions. These factors include Toha (in Arifin, Fuady & Kuswarno, 2017), who claims that Emotions, attitudes, hopes or desires, attention (concentration), learning process, physical and mental health difficulties; needs, values, Motivation, and interest are examples of internal factors. According to Toha, external influences encompass several elements such as family background, acquired information, knowledge, intensity, size, difficulties, repetition, mobility, novelty, familiarity, and the detachment of an object.

Teachers employ listening learning strategies associated with processing material in audio form to improve students' comprehension in listening classes. According to O'Malley et al. (1989), listeners who use bottom-up processing are those who deduce the meaning of the words in the text. This means that the bottom-up processing strategy deals with interpreting learning material based on the words presented by the teacher through listening to learning material. In order for students to comprehend the content, they must first break down different sounds into words. Once the words are put into a text, they may deduce the meaning of an audio-learning resource.

The listening learning strategy using a bottom-up strategy can be related to the researchers' findings, which are the strategies teachers use in listening learning for academic purposes, namely the pausing and repeating strategies. The teacher will play audio for the class during the pausing and repeating strategy. After the class has listened to the audio, they are asked to look for its meaning. However, the audio will pause for a brief period so that the students can interpret it briefly using the written words or sentences. Play it again and again until the students fully comprehend the meaning and the audio fades. Students begin the bottom-up listening process by narrowing their attention to important words or phrases. As a result,

they eventually combine these phonemes to generate meaning (Vandergrift, 2004). According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), phonemic units are decoded and joined to form words, words are joined to form phrases, phrases are joined to form utterances, and utterances are joined to form a comprehensive, meaningful text. This indicates that the process ends with the determination of meaning. Researchers are analyzing student perceptions about using listening learning strategies in the classroom. Those perceptions indicate that the use of pause and repeat strategies is effective because students can ensure they understand the audio and do not have any trouble understanding the provided material. The students believed that the teacher could more easily regulate their pace and comprehension and clarify or explain the learning material when they used listening, pausing, and repeating learning strategies.

In addition to using bottom-up processing strategies, teachers also utilize top-down processing strategies to interpret audio content to help students actualize their comprehension during the listening-learning process. Top-down processing, according to O'Malley et al. (1989), is the method used by those who can effectively examine and comprehend text utilizing schematic knowledge. According to a different viewpoint, students who learn information top-down base their assumptions, conclusions, clarifications, and visualizations on real-world facts. (Graham, 2017). To help students understand the significance of the material they are trying to learn.

The listening learning strategy using a top-down strategy can be related to the researchers' findings, which is the teacher strategy used in listening learning for academic purposes, namely the note-taking strategy. When using the note-taking strategy, students will concentrate on taking notes on the audio that is being played. By arranging their ideas and choosing relevant written material, they will be able to comprehend the course material more fully. That in order to comprehend what was said, the listener actively creates or reconstructs the speaker's original meaning by interacting with it using their prior knowledge of the listening context (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). This is so that the audio content may be interpreted using the top-down strategy, relating it to the students' already understanding of the subject matter by drawing on everything they know about it. In top-down listening, students draw connections between what they already know about the issue and what they hear during the listening process (Newton & Nation, 2020). According to student perspectives that researchers have collected about using the note-taking strategy in the listening learning process, students can study the content by focusing on the main ideas they have noted. Students believe they can organize their ideas, activate information processing, and generate references they can examine for more information by employing listening learning practices.

Teachers employ a variety of strategies while teaching listening skills to make sure that students understand the topic being presented. Several strategies are employed to complement the listening learning strategy used in the classroom to evaluate how effectively the learning process is going. One way that teachers evaluate the students' understanding of the subject matter is by assigning homework and providing feedback. This is done in order for the teacher to determine whether or not the pupils' comprehension aligns with their understanding. Depending on the volume and quality of assignments finished, different students will experience different effects from assignments on their academic performance (Cooper et al., 2006; Ektem & Yıldız, 2017). Researchers' perceptions reveal that the lecturer's assignment-giving strategy is crucial during the listening-learning process because, when more interactive and collaborative assignments are given, like group discussions, students can practice and improve their skills later on, which is especially useful when learning English. Giving feedback is a listening learning approach to ensure pupils understand the subject matter. According to Clynes & Rafferty (2008) in Entika (2019), feedback boosts students' self-esteem and motivation while assisting in their learning, offering direction, and boosting their trust in being able to learn. Regarding the feedback strategy, some students believe that it is required of them, as they think that teachers who cannot provide feedback are not knowledgeable about the subject matter being taught. Other students believe that the use of feedback strategies should take place directly, as they believe this allows them to engage with the lecturer directly and receive a more in-depth and personalized explanation.

Students' shared perspectives indicate that using listening comprehension strategies face-to-face in the classroom is preferred. When students experience the application of listening skills firsthand, it will be beneficial. This is as stated by the opinions of students who believe that having face-to-face interactions with teachers and peers helps them to learn the subject matter more thoroughly and develop their listening abilities quickly. In addition, educators can offer suitable listening exercises. Directly in the classroom with easy access to audio resources.

According to the explanation above, it can be seen that students' perceptions include positive perceptions and negative perceptions. In Shandi's thesis (2020), Irwanto stated that positive perceptions include all knowledge and responses that persist in efforts to utilize them. The viewed object will then be activated, accepted, and supported to continue. Negative perception is any information or response that does not align with what is perceived. it will act passively or reject and reject what he sees. It can be seen

that according to student opinions, in a class with the teacher, they can ask questions directly and receive direct answers through criticism and recommendations that gauge how well the students have understood the subject matter. Students can take notes without difficulties just after the teacher explains things. Assigning assignments significantly impacts learning in a face-to-face setting because it allows students to collaborate with the teacher and other students to rectify any errors in the assignment and receive quick feedback from the teacher.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that students perceive the implementation of listening learning strategies in the classroom as highly effective. The effectiveness arises from teachers' use of efficient instructional strategies that enhance students' comprehension of the material. These strategies enable students to better understand the subject matter through the application of both top-down and bottom-up processes.

In the top-down approach, strategies such as note-taking allow students to record what they hear, connect it with prior knowledge, and interpret the information accordingly. In contrast, the bottom-up approach focuses on understanding meaning through the recognition of words and phrases. For example, the pause-and-repeat strategy—where teachers play audio material, pause briefly for students to process the meaning, and then continue—helps learners comprehend the material more effectively.

Overall, students' impressions indicate that the use of these listening strategies not only facilitates their comprehension in the current learning context but also equips them with practical skills that can be applied across different disciplines in the future.

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