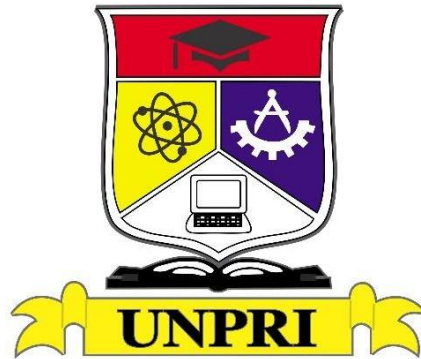


Exploring Listening Proficiency Among University Students

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The capacity to focus on or perceive sounds is referred to as listening capacity, even though listening differs from hearing. While these terms are often used interchangeably, hearing and listening possess unique qualities. Both concepts involve the sense of sound, but the differing terms indicate the level of intentionality. Hearing is primarily associated with passive activities. People are said to be hearing when they detect sounds without concentrating on their source. When someone listens, their brain automatically interprets the words into the speaker's intended meaning.

Listening is one of the most essential skills, as it serves as the foundation for language development (Buayaban, 2021). Children first learn to listen before they begin speaking, then progress to reading, and finally develop writing skills. Brown (2014) also emphasizes that listening is often considered an integral part of speaking (as cited in Gilakjani et al., 2016). In other words, students develop their ability to speak English by first listening to the language. Listening involves the capability to understand spoken words. It is a crucial skill for nearly every activity we participate in.

People engage with various auditory inputs, such as what is communicated during a conversation, whether in person or over the phone, announcements that provide information at places like airports or train stations, the weather updates broadcasted on the radio, dramas aired on the radio, music, the conversations of others (often referred to as eavesdropping), lectures, professional guidance, such as at the doctor's office or in a bank, instructions that explain how to operate a photocopier or other equipment, and recorded dialogues used in educational settings.

Gronet and Van Duzer (1991) define listening as an active process where the listener constructs meaning from spoken input. They emphasize that listening is more than just hearing words—it involves understanding, interpreting, and responding to what is being communicated. The explanation outlined above shows how important the role of listening is in human life, for children, teenagers, and adults. Listening is a medium which people can communicate with each other to convey the message they want to convey. Listening comprehension is a complex process that requires the listener to simultaneously decode sounds, recognize words, understand grammar, and interpret meaning. Learners, especially in a second-language (L2) context, often encounter difficulties that affect their ability to comprehend spoken language effectively.

The researcher chose to conduct this research because English is an international language that is considered very important to master, as it opens up access to the world

in various fields of work. For university students, particularly those enrolled in English-medium programs or preparing for international careers, proficient listening skills are crucial for understanding lectures, engaging in classroom discussions, and navigating real-world communication. Despite this importance, many students face difficulties in listening comprehension due to challenges such as unfamiliar accents, rapid speech, and limited access to authentic listening experiences. According to Hamouda (2013), the factors contributing to students' difficulties in listening comprehension can be categorized into four groups: issues related to the listening text, challenges associated with tasks and events, problems stemming from the listeners themselves, and aspects of lecture techniques. This study aims to uncover these obstacles and assess the listening skills of students at the university. To support students in knowing their level of listening comprehension, researchers are interested in conducting research at STIKES Columbia Asia Medan and have proposed one method for exploring Listening Skills through the British Council website.

Thesis from Universitas Islam Riau Angelina Kusuma Ningrum entitled "An Analysis of Listening Comprehension Problem on Communicative Listening Subject at The Second Semester of English Language Education Program" discusses the level of students' listening comprehension in the second semester of English language education. The similarity with this study is that both researchers use the same analysis technique, using descriptive and qualitative research, and use data collection procedures using a questionnaire in the form of a Google form to analyze the score to interpret the findings. And the difference in this study is that the previous researcher focused on the communicative problem while the researcher will explore students' listening comprehension at the university.

In the Journal Widya Andayani entitled "From Flexible to subtitling :Exploring students' experiences on improving listening skills through podcasts," previous research focused on the effectiveness of using podcasts to improve English listening skills among high school students in Indonesia, while in this research using British Council media. The similarities in both studies are that both use a qualitative method and use questionnaires to measure their listening levels.

1.2 Identification Of the Problem

Listening is a crucial skill in language learning, yet many STIKES Columbia Asia Medan students struggle to comprehend spoken English effectively. Despite learning English as part of their curriculum, students face difficulties in understanding native speakers, different accents, and fast speech. Based on the research that has been conducted, the following are the issues found in the field.

1. Listening Comprehension Difficulties

Students at STIKES Columbia Asia Medan often face challenges in understanding spoken English, largely due to the rapid pace of speech, diverse accents, and limited access to real-life listening materials. These issues are further intensified by conventional teaching methods that prioritize reading and writing skills over the development of listening abilities.

2. Emotional and Psychological Factors

Many students struggle with anxiety and low self-confidence when listening to spoken English, which hampers their ability to comprehend effectively. This is particularly problematic in the healthcare sector, where clear and accurate communication is crucial.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problem of this research is:

1. How are the listening skills of students at STIKES Columbia Asia Medan?
2. What are the factors that influence of students at STIKES Columbia Asia Medan listening ability?

1.4 The Objective of the Study

This study seeks to explore the main factors that impact university students' listening proficiency and examine how these elements influence their understanding of spoken English in academic contexts. It also aims to assess the effectiveness of existing teaching methods and learning materials in enhancing students' listening abilities.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

This study aims to examine the listening skills of students at STIKES Columbia Asia Medan, with a particular focus on their use of British Council learning resources. It is limited to a specific group of students who have actively participated in British Council activities, such as online listening tasks, audio materials, and courses. The research does not address other language skills like speaking, reading, or writing, nor does it involve students who have not used British Council tools. Additionally, the study takes into account the academic semester and time period in which it is conducted.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute to:

1. For the Lecturer

The lecturer in STIKES Columbia Asia Medan can take benefit from this research. They can use the British Council website as a fun method to learn and improve students' listening skills.

2. For the students

Students in STIKES Columbia Asia Medan can realize that listening is an important skill in English. Students who have some difficulties listening to English words can learn practically, so it is easy for them to learn to listen well.

3. For the reader

For the reader, this research will give them some information about how well the British Council website can improve students' listening skills.