



Exploring Students' Difficulties in TOEFL Listening

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Abstract. The aim of this research was to identify the challenges encountered by students while engaging with TOEFL Preparation Tests within the English Study Program at FKIP UKI TORAJA. The participants in this study consisted of 12 students from the 8th semester of the English Department at FKIP UKI Toraja. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method and collected data through interviews. The data was then analyzed using three main stages: the data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. After analyzing and discussing the findings, it can be concluded that 8th semester English Department students at UKI Toraja encounter various difficulties when listening to TOEFL Preparation tests, which can be categorized into three main areas. Each category presents different challenges. Regarding the comprehension of listening materials, students face difficulties with complex grammatical structures, understanding every word in spoken discourse, interpreting the meaning of lengthy spoken texts, and encountering unfamiliar vocabulary. Additionally, students encounter difficulties related to listening itself, including anxiety, deducing the meaning of unknown words, lack of concentration, unclear pronunciation, difficulty with retention, losing focus, and listening without transcripts. Furthermore, students also face obstacles related to the physical setting, such as poor-quality cassettes or discs, inadequate equipment, and background noise.

Keywords: *Analysis, Difficulties, Listening, TOEFL, Test*

Introduction

English, being an international language, holds immense importance in today's era of globalization. According to (Hessel & Strand, 2023) Proficiency in English has become a fundamental requirement for effective communication in various fields such as trade, transportation, technology, and tourism. To assess someone's English proficiency, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is widely used. In Indonesia, several renowned universities make the TOEFL test mandatory for admission and also for thesis or dissertation exams. Additionally, companies utilize it as a prerequisite for job applications and promotions. As stated by (Gu et al., 2015), TOEFL serves as a standardized assessment globally, including in Indonesia, to evaluate individuals' English language skills for higher education.

Among the different language skills, listening plays a pivotal role in gaining knowledge, comprehending the world around us, (Stephan & Pathak, 2016) developing ideals and values, and appreciating various aspects of life. In this age of mass communication where oral interactions are dominant, effective and critical listening skills are increasingly vital. (Gil Fernández et al., 2021) A significant aspect of the listening process is comprehension, especially when answering listening tests. It involves understanding spoken language, encompassing individual words, speech sounds, and overall meaning.

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At the Christian University of Indonesia Toraja (UKI Toraja), particularly in the English Department, TOEFL Preparation holds great significance. (Cogill J, 2008) Mastering listening skills is crucial for achieving success in the TOEFL test. However, despite the significance of listening skills, students often encounter difficulties during the listening process. Through observation among seventh-semester students in the English Department at UKI Toraja, it was noticed that students exhibited unexpected responses and struggled to complete tasks or listen attentively. (Aprino et al., 2022) To overcome these challenges, it becomes necessary to identify the factors that contribute to students' difficulties with the listening section of the TOEFL test. Some students in the English Department have expressed difficulties with TOEFL listening comprehension.

Consequently, one plausible approach to address these issues is to investigate and understand the factors that influence students' struggles. Conducting a literature review reveals several elements that can affect listening comprehension, including characteristics of the listener, characteristics of the passage being listened to, and the testing conditions in which the listening section is conducted. (Maharani & Miftachudin, 2021) By exploring these factors, we can gain valuable insights into improving students' performance and addressing their difficulties effectively.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for exploring students' difficulties in TOEFL Listening within the context of UKI Toraja's English Education Program can be developed

In the context of exploring students' difficulties in TOEFL Listening, Schema Theory can be applied to understand how students' prior knowledge and experiences influence their understanding of TOEFL Listening materials.

When students engage in listening comprehension tasks, they activate their existing schemas related to the topic, context, and language structures present in the listening passages. These schemas are built from their previous experiences, knowledge of the world, and familiarity with the English language. However, when students' prior knowledge is at odds with the structure and substance of the TOEFL Listening materials, they can have challenges.

Schemas may not be enough to help students understand the listening sections if they have never heard academic English before or if the subject matter is completely new to them. Problems with content comprehension, concept following, supporting detail identification, and inference making might arise when students' schemas do not align with the listening materials.

Researchers may examine the influence of students' preexisting schemas on their understanding of TOEFL Listening materials by incorporating Schema Theory into the theoretical framework. They might hone in on terminology, cultural allusions, or academic discourse as particular areas where students struggle owing to schema incompatibilities. With this knowledge in hand, teachers may devise plans to help their students' preexisting schemas better prepare them for the TOEFL Listening part. Some strategies include giving students background information, teaching them key vocabulary words ahead of time, or actively activating and constructing the right schemas before they listen to the contents.

Overall, Schema Theory adds to the existing body of research by drawing attention to the significance of students' background information in explaining their TOEFL Listening performance issues. It proposes instructional strategies to handle schema mismatches and improve understanding, and it stresses the significance of bringing students' preexisting schemas into alignment with the listening materials.

Researchers may study the unique problems and obstacles encountered by students of the English Education Program at UKI Toraja on the TOEFL Listening section by combining these theoretical viewpoints. Students' listening abilities and their scores on the TOEFL Listening portion may be improved with the use of the results that guide the creation of individualized interventions and methods of education.

Material and Method

Qualitative methods, such as student surveys and in-depth interviews, were used to gather data for this study. According to (Aspers & Corte, 2019) According to, qualitative research focuses on providing meaning via the description of real-life events and circumstances. College of English majors at FKIP UKI TORAJA in their eighth semester make up the study's participant group. The purpose of this research is to better understand the difficulties these students have on the TOEFL listening comprehension section of the test. The major technique used to collect data for this study is interviews. In an interview, the interviewer asks the interviewee questions designed to elicit answers that shed light on the issue at hand by way of expressions and information. The use of open-ended questions in interviews allows for more free-form replies.

We will use the framework suggested by (Baltacı, 2017) to examine the gathered data. This model consists of several steps for qualitative data analysis: (1) Data Reduction: As the data obtained from the research location can be substantial and may become more complex over time, it is important to perform data reduction. This involves summarizing the data, selecting relevant subjects, focusing on important aspects, and searching for themes and patterns; (2) Data Presentation: Following the data reduction process, the subsequent stage involves displaying the information. Qualitative research provides flexibility in presenting data through methods such as concise descriptions, charts, interconnections between categories, flowcharts, and narrative text, the latter being a commonly employed approach in the past; (3) Drawing Conclusions/Verification: The third phase in data analysis, as outlined by Miles and Huberman, involves drawing conclusions or verification. In qualitative research, these conclusions may provide partial responses to the initial problem statement, yet they often necessitate additional refinement after the research is conducted at the study site. To sum up, this qualitative research approach entails conducting interviews with 8th-semester students in the English Department at FKIP UKI TORAJA to investigate the challenges they encounter in TOEFL listening comprehension. The data gathered from these interviews is analyzed utilizing the framework suggested by Miles and Huberman, which includes processes such as data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification.

Results and Discussion

Results

As outlined in the preceding chapter, the study's objectives are to identify the challenges faced by students in the TOEFL Preparation Test within the English Study Program at FKIP UKI TORAJA. The researcher provides an overview of the research findings derived from the analysis conducted through interviews with English major students at UKI Toraja. The data is gathered from active 8th-semester students majoring in English at the university. A total of 12 students, comprising 2 males and 10 females, who have undergone the TOEFL test in the TOEFL preparation course, were interviewed.

Students' Difficulties Related to Listening Material

The primary challenges in listening comprehension stemmed from the materials, including unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, restricted vocabulary, and lengthy spoken passages.

Unfamiliar Words

The initial inquiry seeks to investigate whether students comprehend listening texts that incorporate numerous unfamiliar words, including idioms. The interview results confirmed that the students' main challenge lies in dealing with unfamiliar words, as articulated by participants 1 through 12. The following are excerpts from the students' responses in the interviews:

S1: *Tidak karena pengetahuan saya tentang idiom kurang.* [I don't know much about idioms.]

- S4: *Tidak ,karna sulit untuk memahami kata-kata baru apalagi idiom [No, because it's difficult to understand new words, especially idioms..]*
- S6: *Tidak. Karena kata-kata asing membuat saya kesulitan memahami teks tersebut secara utuh. [No. Because foreign words make it difficult for me to understand the text as a whole.]*

From the insights gathered in the aforementioned interviews, the researcher deduced that a significant number of students encounter challenges in grasping the speaker's message due to the presence of unfamiliar words, including idioms that are not comprehensible to them.

Difficult Grammatical Structure

The second inquiry seeks to investigate whether students encounter challenges with complex grammatical structures. The interview results demonstrated that students in the English Department at FKIP UKI Toraja find difficulty in dealing with grammatical structures, as expressed by participants 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Here are excerpts from the students' responses in the interviews:

- S3: *Iya sulit karena dimana kita membutuhkan ketepatan dan pengetahuan extra mengenai grammar. Bukan semata-mata menebak kata apa yang di dengar, grammar membutuhkan analisa dari rumus tesnses.[It's difficult because where we need accuracy and extra knowledge about grammar. Not just guessing what words are heard, grammar requires analysis of the tesnses formula.]*
- S4: *Iya sulit karena bahasa memiliki struktur gramatikal yang rumit membuat saya sulit untuk tidak memahaminya. [yes it is difficult because the language has a complicated grammatical structure that makes it difficult for me not to understand it.]*
- S11: *Iya, menurut Saya , saat mendengarkan teks listening pada test TOEFL, saya sering sulit dalam memahami karena grammarnya yang sulit saya bedakan. [Yes, in my opinion, when I listen to listening text on the TOEFL test, I often find it difficult to understand because the grammar is difficult for me to distinguish.]*

Derived from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher inferred that a majority of the students have not achieved proficiency in grammar, perceiving it as a challenging task. Similarly, in the context of listening, students encountered difficulty due to the intricate grammatical structures present in the listening texts. They expressed that comprehending the listening passages in the TOEFL test posed a challenge owing to the complex grammar involved. According to them, gaining a thorough understanding of grammar demands heightened precision and knowledge.

Limited vocabulary

The third inquiry aims to investigate whether students comprehend the speech of a native speaker. The interview results indicated that students in the English Department at FKIP UKI Toraja find it challenging to understand every single word in incoming speech, as mentioned by participants 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 10. Here are excerpts from the students' responses in the interviews:

- S4 : *Bagi saya kurang dalam memahami karna terkadang prononciationnya tidak jelas,dan terkadang terdapat banyak kata-kata baru yang membuat saya Kurang dalam memahami apa yang di dikatakan penutur aslinya. [For me, I lack understanding because sometimes the pronunciation is not clear, and*

sometimes there are many new words that make me less able to understand what the native speaker is saying.]

S9: *Tidak selalu, apalagi jika ada kosakata yang jarang saya dengar.* [Not always, especially if there is a vocabulary that I rarely hear]

S10: *Tidak karena banyak kata-kata baru yang saya tidak pahami ketika penutur asli yang berbicara.* [No because many words I don't understand when a native speaker is speaking]

Derived from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher inferred that the majority of students encounter difficulty in listening due to challenges in understanding each word in incoming speech. This suggests a lack of mastery in vocabulary, possibly stemming from encountering numerous unfamiliar words when native speakers communicate. Consequently, when attempting to comprehend every word spoken by the speaker, they face challenges as not all the words are familiar to them.

Long Spoken

The fourth question aims to explore whether students face difficulties in understanding extended spoken texts. The results from the interviews affirmed that students do encounter challenges in grasping the meaning of lengthy spoken passages. This difficulty was articulated by several students, including participants 1 through 12. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

S3: *Ya sulit, karena suatu kata yang bergandengan dengan kata-kata lain akan beda maknanya. Kalau satu kata mungkin masih bisa dipahami dan juga agak kelelahan dan terganggu ketika mendengarkan teks yang panjang.* [Yes, it is difficult, because a word that goes hand in hand with other words will have different meanings. If one word may still be understood and also a bit tired and distracted when listening to a long text.]

S4: *Iya ,karna jika textnya panjang otomatis akan terdapat banyak kata-kata baru didalamnya sehingga membuat saya kurang dalam menafsirkan maknanya* [Yes, because if the text is long, there will be a lot of new words in it, so that it makes me less able to interpret the meaning]

S5: *Iya saya merasa sulit dalam menafsirkan makna dari teks yang panjang karena terlalu panjang teksnya sehingga susah mengerti apa maknanya.* [Yes, I find it difficult to interpret the meaning of a long text because the text is too long so it is difficult to understand what it means..]

Based on the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher reached the conclusion that the majority of students encountered challenges in understanding the meaning of lengthy spoken texts. This difficulty could potentially be attributed to their limited vocabulary proficiency, as the texts often contained numerous unfamiliar words that hindered their interpretation.

Students' Difficulties Related to The Listener

The challenges students face in listening comprehension stem not only from the content of the listening materials but also from the listeners' insufficient proficiency in the English language. The obstacles associated with the listener factor encompass pre-listening anxiety, concerns about unclear pronunciation, difficulty in retention, encountering unfamiliar words, loss of concentration, and the absence of a transcript during listening sessions.

Feel Worried

The fifth inquiry seeks to investigate whether students experience feelings of fear and concern regarding their ability to comprehend spoken language. The results obtained from the interviews affirmed that students within the English Department of FKIP UKI Toraja genuinely experience fear and anxiety regarding their ability to comprehend auditory content. This apprehension was articulated by various students, including participants 2 through 12. Here are a few illustrative instances of student responses gathered during the interviews:

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S3: *Ya sedikit takut dan khawatir karena akan harus bisa memahami apa yang dituturkan oleh pembicara nantinya.* [Yes, I am a little afraid and worried because you will have to be able to understand what the speaker will say later]

S5: *Sangat takut dan khawatir karena soal TOEFL susah dimengerti ketika mendengar apa yang dikatakan penutur.* [Very afraid and worried because the TOEFL questions are difficult to understand when hearing what the speakers are saying.]

S12: *Iya saya khawatir dan takut jika tidak ada satu pun jawaban saya yang benar.* [Yes I am worried and afraid if none of my answers are correct.]

Drawing from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher reached the conclusion that students frequently experience fear and worry when undertaking the listening section of the TOEFL test. This apprehension may stem from the fear of providing incorrect answers and not earning any points. Additionally, students express concern about the difficulty level of the TOEFL questions, fearing that they may struggle to comprehend them.

Unclear Pronunciation

The sixth inquiry seeks to investigate whether students encounter challenges in recognizing familiar words due to variations in pronunciation by the speaker. The outcomes of the interviews verified that students encounter challenges related to unclear pronunciation. Several students, including participants 1 through 12, expressed this difficulty. Here are a few instances of student responses gathered during the interviews:

S1: *Iya saya merasa sulit karena meskipun saya mengetahui kata tersebut tetapi pronouncation native spekaker berbeda dengan yang saya tahu sehingga itu dapat mengecoh saya.* [Yes, I find it difficult because even though I know the word, the native speaker's pronouncation is different from what I know so that it can deceive me.]

S8: *Iya sulit karena pronouncation dari native speaker berbeda dari yang saya ketahui.* [Yes, it's difficult because the pronouncation of native speakers is different from what I know.]

S11 *Iya sulit karena memiliki memiliki aksen atau dialek yang berbeda dengan yang saya ketahui.* [Yes, it's difficult because I have a different accent or dialect from what I know.]

Drawing from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher concluded that a significant number of speakers have varying pronunciations for

words. These differences in pronunciation could be attributed to diverse accents or dialects. Consequently, students are required to practice listening to a wide range of accents and dialects to enhance their ability to understand different speakers..

Hard to Remember

The seventh question seeks to investigate whether students experience difficulties in remembering words or phrases that have been heard quickly when answering the TOEFL Test's listening comprehension section. The results of the interviews substantiated that students within the English Department at FKIP UKI Toraja encounter difficulties in memorizing words. This challenge was articulated by multiple students, including participants 1 through 12. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

- S2: *Iyah, saya sulit dalam menghafal kata dengan mendengarkan.* [Yes, I have a hard time memorizing words by listening.]
- S5: *Ya, suara yang terlalu cepat membuat saya kesulitan mengingat kata atau frasa yang baru saya dengar.* [Yes, the voice is too fast, making it difficult for me to remember the words or phrases I just heard]
- S11: *Iya, saya sering lupa mengenai apa yang saya dengar saat test Listening* [Yes, I often forget about what I heard during the Listening test]

Based on the result of interview above the researcher concluded that many students found difficult in listening comprehension because are difficult on memorizing words. It means that they quickly forgot what they have just heard.

Encountering Unknown Word

The eighth inquiry sought to explore whether students encounter challenges in deciphering the meaning of unfamiliar words while listening. The results of the interviews affirmed that students do indeed experience difficulties in deducing the meaning of unknown words. This challenge was voiced by various students, including participants 1 through 12. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

- S3. *Ya, karena pemahaman saya tentang kosakata bahasa Inggris masih fasih sehingga sulit untuk menyimpulkan apa yang si pembicara katakan.* [Yes, because my understanding of English vocabulary is still fluent so it is difficult to conclude what the speaker is saying.]
- S5: *Sangat sulit, karena terlalu cepat berbicara sehingga saya tidak bisa pahami apa yang dikatakan dan sulit untuk menyimpulkan arti kata.* [Yes, It was very difficult, because I spoke too fast so I couldn't understand what was being said and it was difficult to conclude the meaning of words.]
- S7: *Iya karena sulit mengikuti pembicaraannya* [yes because it is difficult to follow the conversation]

Drawing from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher inferred that a majority of the students struggle to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words. This difficulty arises from the tendency of students to continue listening without contemplating the meaning when encountering unknown words. It is crucial for students to be adept at inferring the meaning of unknown words, especially considering that the audio is played only once.

Lose Concentration

The ninth question aimed to investigate whether students can concentrate when they are simultaneously searching for answers and listening to dialogue. The interview findings confirmed that students do face difficulties in maintaining concentration during this task. This was expressed by several students, including student 1, student 2, student 3, student 4, student 5, student 6, student 7, student 8, student 10, student 11, and student 12. Here are a few examples of student responses gathered during the interviews:

- S3: *Tidak, saya tidak akan bisa berkonsentrasi jika mencari jawaban dan mendengarkan di waktu yang bersamaan karena itu akan sangat membuat konsentrasi saya hilang.* [No, I won't be able to concentrate if I look for answers and listen at the same time because it will really make my concentration go away.]
- S5: *Tidak dapat, karena bingung mau fokus ke dialog atau mencari jawaban.* [I can't, because I'm confused about whether to focus on the dialogue or looking for answers.]
- S7: *Tidak karena tidak bisa konsentarsi jika mencari jawaban dan mendengarkan dialog secara bersamaan.* [No because I can't concentrate when looking for answers and listening to dialogues at the same time.]

Derived from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher concluded that the majority of students reported an inability to concentrate during listening comprehension. This issue may arise due to the presence of surrounding noises, which could originate from external sources.

The tenth inquiry sought to explore whether students encounter challenges in completing the Listening Comprehension section of the TOEFL Test without a transcript. The interview results affirmed that students indeed find it difficult to answer the listening section questions without a transcript. This difficulty was articulated by various students, including participants 1 through 12. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

- S6: *Ya. Transkrip akan membantu saya menjawab soal-soal.* [Yes. The transcript will help me answer the questions.]
- S8: *Iya sulit karena dengan adanya transkrip sangat membantu saya mengerjakan test TOEFL* [Yes it is difficult because the transcript really helps me do the TOEFL test test]
- S11: *Iya sulit karena saya kesulitan tanpa transkrip karena masih kesulitan dalam pronouncation dan vocabulary.* [Yes, it is difficult because I have difficulty without transcripts because I still have difficulties in pronouncation and vocabulary]

From the findings of the aforementioned interviews, the researcher inferred that the majority of students find it challenging to engage in the listening session of the TOEFL test without having access to the transcript. This difficulty may be attributed to their struggles with pronouncation and vocabulary, making the absence of transcripts a hindrance to their comprehension.

Students' Difficulties Related to Speaker And Physical Setting

Challenges in listening comprehension are not solely attributed to factors related to the message or the listener; they also arise from the physical setting, encompassing environmental aspects. Disturbances caused by noise and a substandard CD player affect students during their listening comprehension.

Noise

The eleventh question aimed to investigate whether students have difficulty concentrating when there is noise around them. The results of the interviews affirmed that noise is indeed one of the challenges encountered by students. This difficulty was voiced by several students, including participants 1 through 12. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

- S3: *Ya karena jika ada kebisingan sementara kumpulan kalimat tanpa henti memaksa untuk terus mendengar serta berpikir sudah pasti konsentrasi saya akan tiba tiba terhenti* [Yes, because if there is noise while a collection of sentences is endlessly forcing me to keep listening and thinking, it is certain that my concentration will suddenly stop]
- S7: *Sulit, karena otomatis kita tidak bisa untuk berkonsentrasi jika ada suara yang bising.* [It's difficult, because we automatically can't concentrate if there is a loud sound.]
- S11: *Iya sulit, Saat ada suara bising, saya tidak bisa focus mendengarkan, karena terlalu banyak suara ribut.* [Yes, it's difficult. When there's noise, I can't focus on listening, because there's too much noise.]

Derived from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher concluded that noises significantly disrupted students' listening learning experiences. This disruption stems from the high concentration required for effective listening. However, in the presence of noises, students struggle to maintain concentration and listen attentively. This underscores the importance of soundproof classrooms to prevent external noises from disturbing students.

Poor-quality CD player

The twelfth question aimed to investigate whether the unclear sound produced from bad equipment interferes with students' listening. The results of the interviews verified that substandard tapes or disks have a considerable impact on students' capacity to listen to audio. Several students, including participants 1 through 12, expressed this concern. Here are a few instances of student responses collected during the interviews:

- S1: *Tentu saja. Karena apa yang di dengarkan akan sangat mengganggu jika medianya buruk* [Of course. Because what you listen to will be very disturbing if the media is bad]
- S3: *Ya, karena peralatannya itu adalah penunjang dalam mendengarkan pembicara agar bisa mengerjakan test* [Yes, because the equipment is a support in listening to the speaker so that you can do the test]
- S4: *Iya ,karna jika suara yang dihasilkan tidak bagus otomatis kita tidak bisa memahami soal-soal dari test tersebut .* [Yes, because if the sound produced is not good, we automatically cannot understand the questions from the test.]

Derived from the aforementioned interview findings, the researcher inferred that a significant number of students encounter challenges due to the poor quality of tapes or disks, which profoundly impacts their ability to listen to audio. This issue arises because inadequate tape or disk quality results in unclear sounds, making it difficult for students to comprehend the audio as they cannot hear it clearly.

Discussion

Students' difficulties in listening comprehension TOEFL Preparation Test

The research findings regarding the research question revealed that students' difficulties in listening can be categorized into three main groups: those associated with the listening material, the listener, and the physical setting.

Students' difficulties related to the listening material

The findings indicate that students encountered various challenges related to the listening material. These difficulties included the complexity of understanding every single word in incoming speech, interpreting the meaning of lengthy spoken texts, dealing with unfamiliar words, grappling with difficult grammatical structures, and encountering new vocabulary.

These findings were similar with the research conducted (Silviyanti et al., 2020) in his research entitled "Learners' Listening Comprehension Difficulties in English Language Learning: The study titled "Learners' Listening Comprehension Difficulties in English Language Learning: A Literature Review" identified challenges in listening comprehension related to the listening material. The research revealed that unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, and idioms were among the difficulties faced by students in understanding spoken content, (Jyoti, 2020) The study conducted by Jyoti (2020) highlighted that students encounter challenges in listening comprehension related to the listening material, specifically with unfamiliar words, lengthy complex texts, and difficult grammatical structures. . This supports According to (Jyoti, 2020), when listening texts contain known words it would be very easy for students to them.

Students' difficulties related to the listener

In addition to challenges associated with the listening material, students also reported difficulties related to the listener, signifying that their struggles in listening comprehension were influenced by internal factors. (Jumino, 2018) states that lack of English language skill from the listener also make them found difficulties in listening comprehension. According to (Kiliç & Uçkun, 2012), when listening texts contain known words it would be very easy for students to them.

This research also has similarities as the previous study conducted by (Kiliç & Uçkun, 2012) concluded students found several difficulties related to their selves as the listener in listening comprehension that is anxiety, unknown words, unable to concentrate, unclear pronunciation, and hard to remember. According to findings, there were several difficulties that students' faced in listening from the listener factor. They were anxiety, difficult to infer the meaning of unknown words, unable to concentrate, unclear pronunciation, hard to remember, lose focus and sleepy. This supports (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2013) who argues that poor pronunciation is the main problem leading to the students' difficulty in listening comprehension. According to (Al-Rubaat & Ali Alshammari, 2019), in addition to identify the words despite their unfamiliar pronunciation, students should try to decide which linguistic part belongs to which word.

Students' difficulties related to the physical setting

The final category contributing to students' challenges in listening comprehension is associated with the physical setting. (Al-Rubaat & Ali Alshammari, 2019) The term "physical setting" refers to an external factor that affects students' ability to hear the tape recorder in the classroom. In certain classes, teachers utilize recorded materials with lower quality, contributing to the challenges faced by students. .(Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011) The assertion is that listening comprehension is primarily influenced by four main components: the listener, the speaker, the medium, and the environment factors.

This supports the idea that the quality of the sound system can have an impact on the comprehension of learners' listening. (Mohammed, 2017) According to the findings, two difficulties were identified in relation to the physical setting: poor quality of tapes and disks, and noise.

Listening material

The study's results reveal that students encounter challenges in listening comprehension primarily attributed to unfamiliar words and idioms found in the listening materials. Participants noted that their lack of familiarity with idiomatic expressions impeded their understanding of the texts. Several students explicitly stated that they struggled to comprehend new words, especially idioms. (Nordlund & Norberg, 2020) this suggests that a limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with idiomatic language pose significant challenges to their listening comprehension. For instance, one student mentioned that their knowledge of idioms was lacking, while another expressed difficulty in understanding new words, particularly idiomatic expressions.

The findings from the interviews strongly support the conclusion that many students encounter difficulties in comprehending spoken texts due to the presence of unfamiliar words and idioms (Javanmard et al., 2017). Some foreign terms were singled out as a major roadblock to fully grasping the texts' meanings. Clearly, students are unable to fully understand the speaker due to these language obstacles.

Educators and curriculum designers may tackle this problem by including activities that increase vocabulary, experience with idiomatic expressions, and exposure to real language sources in listening materials (Silviyanti et al., 2020). Students may improve their listening comprehension by being exposed to more complex words and phrases and by practicing using colloquial expressions. Helping students overcome these challenges may be enhanced by tactics like pre-teaching important terminology and leading conversations on idioms.

In general, the research highlights the need of addressing students' difficulties with hearing materials that include foreign vocabulary and idioms. Educators may assist students in developing better listening comprehension skills by concentrating on expanding students' vocabulary and acquainting them with colloquial idioms.

Anxiety regarding listening skills

According to the results, students' issues with understanding what they hear have more to do with their English skills than with the listening materials themselves. Concern and anxiety, poor pronunciation, forgetfulness, unfamiliar terms, lack of focus, and difficulty without a transcript are some of the elements that contribute to these challenges, according to the results.

A lot of students were nervous and stressed out about how they would do on the TOEFL listening section. This apprehension originates from worries about the perceived difficulty of the questions and the consequences of providing incorrect answers, such as losing points. Additionally, unclear pronunciation by native speakers poses a challenge for students, leading to confusion and potential deception when recognizing familiar words.

Participants commonly expressed difficulty in recalling words or phrases heard quickly, highlighting a challenge in retaining information due to the brisk pace of the listening tasks. Additionally, the participants faced obstacles in deducing the meaning of unknown words, impacting comprehension as they found it challenging to grasp the speaker's intended message.

Lack of concentration emerged as a significant obstacle, with students indicating that simultaneous engagement in finding answers and listening to dialogue affected their ability to concentrate effectively. External noises in the classroom or other distractions could further contribute to this problem. Lastly, students found it challenging to answer listening comprehension questions without the assistance of a transcript. The transcript provided support in navigating unfamiliar vocabulary and pronunciations.

Based on the findings, it is evident that students' listening difficulties arise from various factors both within themselves and in the listening tasks. To address these challenges, strategies can be implemented, such as teaching stress and intonation patterns to enhance pronunciation recognition, providing practice opportunities for memorization skills, incorporating activities to deduce the meaning of unknown words, improving concentration through focused listening exercises, and gradually reducing reliance on transcripts through targeted training. By addressing these factors comprehensively, educators can help students overcome their listening difficulties and improve their overall listening comprehension abilities.

Physical setting hinders listening comprehension

The research findings highlight the impact of the physical setting on students' listening comprehension difficulties. (Ikhsan & Ismail, 2022) emphasize that the external factors, such as the quality of recorded materials used in class, can influence students' ability to hear clearly. Similarly, (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) identifies listener, speaker, medium, and environment factors as key components affecting listening comprehension.

This research aligns with a previous study conducted by (Padang et al., 2022), which discovered that students struggle to understand recording materials due to noise and unclear audio. This emphasizes the significance of sound system quality in learners' ability to comprehend (Caterine et al., 2021). This study's results show that there are two particular physical setting-related issues: high levels of noise and low-quality cassettes and disks.

Conclusion

To review, the primary goal of this research was to look at the difficulties that students in the English Study Program at FKIP UKI Toraja had while listening to practice exams for the TOEFL. It became out that there are three main factors that contribute to these problems: the listening material itself, the listeners, and the listening environment. Particular difficulties encountered when listening to the content were deciphering long lengths of text, learning new words, and dealing with complex grammatical patterns. These challenges highlight the need of targeted education and practice to improve students' comprehension and decoding skills. Students also had issues specific to their listening abilities, such as nervousness, trouble deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words, poor concentration, muddled pronunciation, forgetfulness, distraction, and difficulty following along without transcripts. To overcome these obstacles, it is necessary to create a conducive learning atmosphere and use methods that enhance focus, understanding, and memory. Students also had trouble listening because of the physical environment, which included things like low-quality cassettes or disks, insufficient equipment, and distracting sounds. To ensure that students are able to concentrate and fully understand the spoken content, it is essential to identify and resolve these contextual issues. Teachers, curriculum designers, and language program creators may benefit greatly from this study's findings since they stress the need of identifying and classifying students' challenges. To improve students' listening comprehension abilities, it is necessary to identify the unique obstacles presented by the listening content, listener characteristics, and the physical environment. Then, effective interventions and teaching approaches may be developed to address these issues. To sum up, this research highlights the significance of finding out what students find challenging in listening to TOEFL practice exams and fixing it. Teachers may help their students improve their listening comprehension by identifying the unique difficulties presented by the content, the listeners, and the classroom environment. It is essential to consider these findings when designing language programs and materials, providing support to students, and improving the overall learning environment. Through emphasizing the importance of the thesis statement, providing a comprehensive overview of the difficulties identified in each category, and leaving a final impression on the reader

regarding the implications of the findings, this conclusion effectively fulfills the requirements of a strong and impactful conclusion.

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