

AN OVERVIEW OF TEACHING LISTENING IN ISLAMIC TERTIARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The ultimate aim of this paper is to depict listening activities in teaching Basic Listening designed by lecturers in an EFL classroom observation of Islamic tertiary level of education in Indonesia. Qualitative methods, used to collect and analyze data gained from observation and interview. The result showed that the lecturer designed various activities in teaching Basic Listening in the EFL class, which they were set up in three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The activities in the pre-listening were aimed at generating students' interest, activating student's prior knowledge, and trying to anticipate any difficult vocabularies. The while-listening stage is to invite students to be involved at listening through various physical movements, such as story telling, dialogue, listening to songs, and drama. The post-listening stage is to internalize what they have heard with other language skills and to check students' comprehension.

Keywords: Physical Movement, Teaching Listening, Teaching Strategies.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan menggambarkan kegiatan keterampilan menyimak yang disusun oleh dosen pengampu mata kuliah Basic Listening untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menyimak tingkat dasar mahasiswa salah satu kelas Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa Asing (EFL) di Perguruan Tinggi Islam di Indonesia. Metode kualitatif digunakan untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data yang diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dosen mendesain kegiatan pengajaran yang dirangkai dalam tiga tahap: pre-listening, while-listening, dan post-listening. Kegiatan pre-listening dimaksudkan untuk memancing minat belajar mahasiswa, mengaktifkan pengetahuan yang telah dimiliki mahasiswa, dan mencoba mengantisipasi berbagai kendala dalam pemilihan kata. Kegiatan while-listening bertujuan untuk melibatkan mahasiswa dalam kegiatan story telling, dialogue, listening to songs, dan drama. Sedangkan tahap post-listening didesain untuk menggabungkan apa yang telah mahasiswa dengar dengan keterampilan lainnya (seperti menulis, membaca, dan berbicara) dan untuk memeriksa pemahaman mereka.

Kata Kunci: Pergerakan Fisik, Pengajaran Menyimak, Strategi Mengajar.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is the receptive use of language, which is used most frequently. It is used since a baby is born until she/he is in agony. In Islamic context, a new-baby born is for the first time listened to *adhān* (Islamic call to welcome a new-baby born or to invite Muslims to pray) and when being in agony, an adult is listened to *kalimat toyyibah* (a sentence stating that Allah is the only one God). Even, when she/he has been in school, she/he spent almost half their communication time listening. A study conducted by Rankin (1928) (as cited in Huy, 2015) showed that when we communicate with others, we spend the largest proposition of time, about 45% in listening, but only 30% in speaking, 16% in reading, and 9% in writing. In line with this, Acat, Demiral, & Kaya, (2016) point out that listening is the first language skill that an individual acquires in his/her life and the one that he/she uses most for the rest of the life.

Looking at the description above, listening seems naturally to be the first position out of other language skills (i.e. writing, speaking, and reading) in terms of acquiring new language. This first position is supported by the Government putting listening skill in the first order of the others. As written in the 1975 English Curriculum that the goal of the teaching English as a foreign language was to equip students with abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. But then, this position changes in the next curriculums—1984 and 2004 English curriculum with the order of priorities of the language skills to be developed was reading, listening, writing, and speaking (Furaidah, Saukah, & Widiati, 2015). Although the government now prioritizes reading skill to be developed more than others, the listening is a necessary skill to facilitate the development of learners' English proficiency. For example, skills in listening can help students communicate well in written or orally.

Listening skill is the ability to identify the language and understand the meaning of what speakers are saying. Understanding a meaning is hardly easy to do unless she/he has a strong listening skill. Bozorgian & Pillay, (2013) state that the English language learners need to have strong listening skills to interpret the meaning effectively. With regards to this ability, in university context in Indonesia, especially at one of Islamic tertiary level of educations in Indonesia, several facts show that the majority of English studies department students failed to have a good score in pre-test and post-test of listening skill conducted in the first class period and sixteenth class periods. Another fact also shows that one factor predisposing students' passive in absorbing lectures is poor in understanding what people are saying (Johnson, 2011). However, contradictory with those of low scores and poor understanding, the information gained from Basic Listening lecturer saying

that most of the students got good scores (B) or average rank between 70 – 79. These facts lead to the interpretation that Basic Listening course taught in English Studies Department at Islamic tertiary level of education where the study was conducted seems to apply good teaching strategies that are considered useful to improve students' listening skill.

At the Islamic tertiary level of education where the study was conducted, listening is not served as integrated courses but as discrete one due to the students' needs to listen to various types of English discourses intensively as part of their curricular activities. To help students improve their ability in identifying and understanding what the speakers are saying, the Department develops particularly listening skills through these listening courses consisting of Basic Listening, Intermediate Listening, and Advanced Listening of which each of them has 2 credits and 2 semester hours. These must be taught in order, meaning that the students cannot join intermediate or advanced listening course without passing from basic listening course. In other words, Basic Listening course is a prerequisite for intermediate listening course and from that course forth, the intermediate course is a prerequisite for advanced listening course.

Those listening courses are taught by different lecturers in different semesters. Basic listening course is provided at the first semester in English Studies Department at Islamic Tertiary level of education. The detailed information about this course can be seen in the following course description.

Description of Basic Listening Course:

Basic Listening Course is the basic of all pre-requisite subjects of Listening Comprehension subject. This course will train students to gain skills of understanding English spoken at the very basic materials, such as identifying words and sentences in oral communication in the normal speed, though for a certain purpose, it is very rapid and/or rather slow delivery. The students will have some exercises to listen to short conversation or monologues then try to find the key of information and main ideas.

The listening course is provided in the first semester or odd semester in every year. It is true that the lecturer designs the listening strategies prior to teaching in the classroom. Listening strategies as proposed by O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper (1989) are behaviors and thoughts that a listener engages in during listening that are intended to influence the listener encoding processing. The same wavelength as that of O'Malley et al., Huy (2015) defines listening comprehension strategies as steps taken by learners to help them acquire, store, retrieve, and/or use information.

With regard to the aforementioned case, this study aims at investigating the teaching of listening by sketching teaching activities in Basic Listening course applied by the listening lecturer to the first semester students of Islamic tertiary level of education.

Applying descriptive qualitative design in this study, which involved one basic listening lecturer, is to understand and report the characteristics of current and past situation by describing what already exists in a focus group as individuals with similar characteristics. Observation and interviews were used as the research instrument to collect the data needed. The observation was used as the main instrument of which it focuses on the listening lecturer's actions or behaviors in teaching Basic Listening course. In working with this observation, the researcher made use of an observation checklist or guide to record the teaching and learning activities. The observation checklist consisted of variables and descriptors concerning how the listening lecturer teaches in the classroom. The classroom observations were conducted in five class periods consecutively starting from late September to mid-December 2015.

Meanwhile, interviews were used to support or confirm the observation in collecting the data relating to how the lecturer teaches the students in the classroom. About 17 interview items were used, consisting of seven items asked about activities performed in pre-listening stage; six items asked about activities presented in while-listening stage; and four items asked about the activities carried out in the post-listening stage. With regard to the use of interview as the supporting instrument, Cresswell (2012) stated that interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. It is an important way to check the accuracy of—to verify or refute—the impression of which has been gained through observation. Those interview items were addressed to a Basic Listening lecturer teaching in Islamic tertiary level of education.

To support the ways of answering the problem, the previous research and review of theories relating to the teaching strategies of listening skill would be elaborated below. Listening is a language skill which was, and still is, a core research field. Some previous studies relating to this present study, in terms of listening strategy and physical movement, have been conducted by many researchers. The study conducted by Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul, (2013) performed a study to investigate the effect of metacognitive listening strategy training program on listening comprehension. The findings represented that the experimental group had a significantly higher performance and metacognitive strategy training can be used in the listening classes to further the listening process. Another study was conducted by Seif El Nasr (2003) aiming to identify the effectiveness of using language

activities based on songs, dictation and dialogues on developing listening skills in English of fifth grade primary pupils. One thing different from this present study is as the teaching listening activities by Seif El Nasr were limited to songs, dictation and dialogues and as the strategy group by Al-Alwan et al., (2013) was focused on metacognitive strategies, this present study aims to make use of designs the activities the lecturer did. In addition, this, in whichever the listening scores gained by the students, attempts to sketch all activities designed by the listening lecturer within five class periods consecutively.

DISCUSSION

Listening Strategies

There are some listening strategies that can be applied by English lecturers. Some researchers have proposed even more specific teaching strategies of listening skill. For example, Oxford (1990) classified the strategy into strategy groups of which each of them has their own specific strategies that can be applied not only in listening skill but also in other three language skills. Take a look at Table 1.

Table 1. Oxford's Strategy Classification System.

Strategy Groups	Strategy Set	Specific Strategies	Actions
Memory Strategies	Creating mental linkage	Grouping Associating/Elaborating	- Learners can link what they know with what they hear.
	Applying images and sounds	Semantic mapping	- Learners can remember the location of words when listening.
Cognitive Strategies	Practicing	Recognizing and using formulas and patterns Repeating	- Listeners can repeat information to facilitate the retention. - Learners could recognize familiar patterns and use them for guessing the meaning.
	Receiving and sending message	Getting the idea quickly	
	Analyzing and reasoning	Analyzing contrastively Transferring Translating	
	Creating structure for input and output	Note-taking Summarizing	

Compensation Strategies	Guessing intelligently	Using other clues Using linguistics	Listeners guess 'systematically' by using clues without listening every word.
Metacognitive Strategies	Centering your learners Arranging and planning your learning	Paying attention Setting goals and objectives	Students can know what their purposes are while listening.
Affective Strategies	Lowering listeners' anxiety	Using progressive relaxation	- Listeners could keep calm when listening.
	Encouraging yourself Taking your emotional temperature	Listening to your body Discussing your feelings with someone else	- Listeners could increase their confidence in finishing listening tasks.
Social Strategies	Asking questions	Asking for clarification	- Listeners could clarify what they are hearing.
	Cooperating with others	Cooperating with peer	- Listeners could share their information

Other researchers proposing several strategies to teach listening skill in the classroom Azmi, Celik, Yidliz, and Tugrul (2014). They expressed that there are three types of strategies in listening comprehension. They are cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. Furthermore, they pointed out that cognitive strategies are related to understanding and gathering input in short term memory or long-term memory for later use. Comprehension begins with the received data that is examined as consecutive levels of formation and a process of decoding. Metacognitive strategies are management techniques used by learners to control their learning through planning, checking, assessing, and changing. For instance, for metacognitive planning strategies, listeners clear the aims of a listening task and apply specific features of the aural language input that make easy the understanding of aural input. Meanwhile, socio-affective strategies are techniques that listeners use to cooperate with others, to check their comprehension, and to reduce their apprehension.

The Teaching Activities Designed by The Listening Lecturer

This study is concerned with the need to sketch the teaching activities designed by the listening lecturer (respondent) in teaching Basic Listening

course to the students of Islamic tertiary level of education. Based on the observations done by the researcher to the respondent in his classroom, in general the stages of teaching Basic Listening course can be divided into three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. Each of which has some activities that have been designed by the respondent prior to teaching. Although the researcher could only do the observation for five meetings to which it should be all meetings, the researcher could capture the other experiences of the respondent through interviewing. As stated by Seidman, (2006), the interview guide is used as it can capture the meaning people involved in education make of their experience.

The class observed was Class A amounting to 40 students at the English studies department of one of Islamic tertiary level of educations in Indonesia, which ran for one semester from late September to mid-December 2015. The class period was 90 minutes long and was conducted from 8.40 a.m. to 10.20 a.m. on Tuesday. Those 40 students were 22 female and 18 male. All of them use English as a foreign language. The class was tailored for facilitating listening derived from physical movement activities. In the five class periods of observations, I served as a non-participant in the first class period and a participant observer in the rest of the class periods. In one class period, I assigned to play a role with the lecturer for modeling activity or commonly known as a role model.

Based on the result of observation and interview, there are many different activities designed by the respondent in teaching Basic Listening course to students. In the process of teaching and learning, the respondent tried to prepare suitable and appropriate listening materials pursuant to the activities being done, in addition to listening activities to make students more active during class.

1. Pre-listening Activity

In the stage of pre-listening, most of the time students pay attention to what is being said with the purpose of getting them interested in the topic, warming up them, and getting them the general information about the topic. At that time, the lecturer started the lesson by showing some pictures of place, characters, plot, or other realia related to the story and ask the students what they think the story is about, whether they ever read the short story, what kind of short story *Malin Kundang* is, etc. The lecturer then read the title of the story aloud, and explained it through actions, visuals, and sentences. In this case, the lecturer seems to treat the students like young learners as he assumed that the students are beginners. The lecturer then gave a quiz by asking the students if they already know any words in English related to the title of the story of which the title is *Malin Kundang*. While the students

answered the quiz, the lecturer, on the board, wrote any English words coming out from the students. Finally, the lecturer explained the unknown vocabularies from the story through building some sentences. This pre-listening activity which was done within 15 minutes was primarily aimed at activating students' schemata—borrowing the term used by Qiu & Huang (2012) to help them comprehend the text they were going to listen.

In another class period, the lecturer activated students' knowledge as the pre-listening activity. The activation was performed by distributing a worksheet to all students. The lecturer then asked the students to find out the meaning of any highlighted words. In this pre-listening activity, I (the researcher) was involved as a participant observer in student-lecturer interaction and student-student interaction. The response I saw was great. This is shocking that student-lecturer interaction and student-student interaction made the students feel comfortable because they started to regard us as members of their listening community. In line with this, Driscoll, (2011) points out that the presence of an observer positively predisposes the behaviors of those being observed. In working with finding out the meaning of any highlighted words, I found that the majority of students consulted their English-Indonesian electronic dictionary for words they did not understand. Although they were allowed, I was curious to know the reason for using that kind of device. The students said that they could grasp the meanings of words. This way coincides with the statement by Guan, (2015) that transferring the word meaning, in this case, is a reader initiated-strategy as a support device. This pre-listening activity was done within 12 minutes.

2. While-Listening Activity

This stage is useful to help learners develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language through activities. In the stage of while-listening, it was found that the respondent applied several activities acquiring physical movements: telling a story, role-playing dialogue, listening to songs, and doing drama. Each will be elaborated below.

a. Telling a Story

Telling a story always attracts the students' interest if on the part of the teller has a clear and loud voice. In the first session of this stage, the lecturer acted as a story-teller to give an example and skill of how to tell a story well. The lecturer told the story of *Malin Kundang* with a clear and loud voice inasmuch as if not, the students may lose interest for the story. The story of *Malin Kundang* was constructed in the form of simple past and present perfect tenses. When the lecturer presented a story that illustrate the use of simple past tense and present perfect tense, the students were given a

worksheet. The first the lecturer told the story and asked the students to listen to it completely. Then, again the lecturer told the story and asked them to complete the story using the past tense and present perfect tense. For example, in the worksheet, the students will find the text, which is written in the form of simple present tense. While listening to the lecturer, they needed to reconstruct the story in the form of simple past tense and present perfect tense. The following is one paragraph of the story.

She is Malin Kundang's mother. She wants to hug him, releases her sadness of being lonely after so long time. Unfortunately, when the mother comes, Malin Kundang who is in front of his well-dressed wife and his ship crews denies meeting that old lonely woman. For three times her mother begs Malin Kundang and for three times he yells at her. At last Malin Kundang says to her "Enough, old woman!"

Finally, having two of the students retell the story in front of the class. While retelling, other students listened to and looked at their worksheet to see their answers to the worksheet was complete. This activity was performed in 60 minutes.

b. Role-playing Dialogue

One of interesting activities in teaching listening is through dialogue. The majority of students felt motivated to practice and encouraged to active participation in the lesson. The lecturer designed a dialogue not to be long but relevant, realistic, and appropriate with the students' interest. In working with this dialogue activity, the lecturer asked for me (the researcher) to play a role as one of the characters mentioned in the dialogue. In this class period, I served as a co-lecturer that the course lecturer assigned for becoming a partner in a role-play. Before playing the role, the lecturer read the text aloud by himself to describe the situation and place where the dialogue is conducted. The lecturer together with me acted it out in pairs to give the students an idea of how to play a role in the dialogue. While playing a role, both the lecturer and I were reading the dialogue. In this case, the lecturer became a role model of what a good reader is like (Bashir, Bajwa, & Rana, 2014). The following is the illustration of the dialogue.

Susan is a new student. She goes to the university to register.

Susan : Excuse me. Can you help me? I'm looking for the Registration Office.

Steve : Maybe I can. I think it's in the Administration Building. Are you a new student?

Susan : Yes, I am.

Steve : Well, look, here is the map of the campus. We are at the entrance now. The building we face is the Students Union the building on our left is the Administration Building.

Susan : Thank you.

Steve : With pleasure.

Having shown the role-play of dialogue, the lecturer then read aloud another text by himself to be listened to it by the students. While listening, got students to take notes on what they heard from each character and to notice the expression and tone of voice. The students were then asked to reread and acted it out in pairs, using the same expression (gestures and emotional feeling) and the same tone of voice. This activity was conducted in one hour.

c. Listening to Songs

Everyone seems to prefer listening to songs. The aim of this activity is to give students an idea of what the listening materials sounds like. In working with this activity, the lecturer did *free listening* activity—let the students listen to the song completely to hear the music and the lyrics. The song was played two times. In the second time, the students were allowed to imitate the songs. Next activity, the lecturer spread out a worksheet and they require to fill in the blank phrases. The following is the cut-series of worksheet.

I was a little
..... things I used to do
And all the put you through
Mama now I'm here for
For all the I made you
The days I told you
Now it's time for you to
For the things you

Taken from Number One for Me (Maber Zain)

Finally they were asked to come forward to read the complete worksheet. Sometimes other students interrupted when hearing different phrases filled in the worksheet and revised the phrases together. At the end of the activity, all students sang the song. This activity was presented within three meetings with different songs.

d. Doing Drama

Another role-play played in teaching Basic Listening is doing drama. Drama is a powerful language-teaching tool that involves all of the students

interactively all of the class periods. The students were very enthusiastic in doing it. But, then the big problem in this activity was the mastery of English grammar. Fortunately, their enthusiasm of drama is bigger than their English grammar problem. They only seem to think that the ‘show’ must go on. It is of great importance to do a ‘show’ as drama permits teachers to match structures and functions when they teach grammar. The activity designed in this drama covers some steps and was done in three meetings. The first three meetings the lecturer asked the students to work in pairs, but at the third meeting they were asked to work in small groups. Within pairs, students were given pictures to identify animals by writing the names down using dictionary for those they do not know. They did this way—translating a word from dictionary—as a way for some EFL learners, even ESL learners to confirm their own understanding of words and texts (Widodo, 2009).

The lecturer gave out small pieces of papers to students and asked them to jot down one name of animal on each paper. He then took the papers from them and put them on a desk in front of the class. The written part faced the desk, the students saw just blank pieces of papers. He then asked each pair to gradually send a representative to pick up a paper and pantomime what is on it. Savignon (1983) said that pantomime helps learners become comfortable with the idea of performing in front of peers without concern for language that although no language is used during a mime it can be a spur to use a language. While pantomiming, each pair or group jotted down the name of animal pantomimed. Finally the pairs read out their guesses and got a point for each correct guess. The points were counted to see the most successful group. When observing this drama activity, especially in the process of pantomiming, the representative sometimes imitated the sound of an animal, like roar sound for a lion. Meanwhile, some others used face expression to give a clue to other students. This activity coincides with the statement by Zyoud (2010) that drama can stimulate the imagination and motivate the student to experiment with the language she or he has already learned.

The drama done in pairs seems to be similar to speaking activity. Having confirmed the lecturer, he said that he tried to connect the listening skill with speaking skill. The students should listen to what the representative of pairs spoke and pantomimed, and vice versa the other students (listeners) should guess orally to what the representative of pairs spoke and pantomimed. Within groups in the third meeting, the lecturer played a whispering game to detect the students’ mastery of vocabulary. The lecturer divided the class into groups and gave the last person in each group a phrase. When the lecturer whispered “a stripped pajamas man”, the students whispered the phrase to the one in front and so on until the first in line had

the phrase and ran up to the board and wrote it. The first group with the correctly spelt phrase on the board got a point. The points were counted to see most successful group.

3. Post-Listening Activity

The post-listening stage was designed to extend the understanding of the students learned at pre-listening and while-listening stages into other learning tasks like answering the questions (speaking) and writing the answers. EFL students need to act upon what they have heard to expand their thinking, and as stated by Zohrabi & Sabouri (2015) a well-planned post-listening activity is a useful device for them to speak and think. This post-listening stage helps students internalize what they have listened to and comprehended. The ways the lecturer internalizes it can be done through moving on from listening practice to focus on other language skills, such as reading, speaking, and writing.

In this context, the lecturer linked the listening skill with speaking and writing skills. He checked the students' comprehension of the material given by asking them to write or speak what he asked. For example, he questioned the students "what do you know about *Malin Kundang*? What does the song of *number one for me* tell about? Can you describe how to make a request to someone else? Etc. The students responded the questions depending on what the lecturer directed to answer whether in written or orally. Connecting the listening task with the speaking and writing tasks is essentially related because EFL listening can be taught in an integrated way along with other language skills (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011). This post-listening stage was run in 15 minutes.

In short, the teaching procedures or stages starting from pre-, while-, to post-listening have helped the lecturer, teacher, or those working on teaching organize the lesson in order to provide the students with step-by-step instruction. In addition, by using those stages, the lecturer could have an opportunity to set how much time should be spent on each stage. Besides, those stages, according to Widodo & Cirocki (2015), enable the lecturer to decide what kinds of learning activities or strategies that the students would go through in one lesson. Another notion about the use of these sequence of instructional activities was pinpointed by Yang & Chang (2014) that they could keep students alert, motivated, and engaged in listening activities.

CONCLUSION

This study has sketched various types of activities designed by the listening lecturer in the teaching of Basic Listening course in English Studies Program of Islamic tertiary level of education. These various activities were intended to help students improve their listening skill. One principle thing designed

by the lecturer in every meeting of teaching is the use of three phase techniques of teaching: pre-listening activity, while-listening activity, and post-listening activity. These phases, which are relevant to the principles of effective learning strategies, are supported by physical movements to attract the students' interests. Although the three phases are advisable to be applied by other lecturers, the lecturers should notice that when there are problems, they should see the problems as challenges and look for solutions.

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