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## **Students' Difficulties in Learning Listening at the Eleventh Grade Students of SMAN 3 Praya**

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**Abstract:** Listening is one of the important language skills in learning English because it is a receptive skill that provides language input for students. However, in reality students still experience many difficulties when learning listening, as well as the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya. This research was aimed to find out students' achievement in learning listening at the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya, to find out the difficulties experienced by students in learning listening and to find out the factors that cause these difficulties. This research used descriptive qualitative method. Out of 121 eleventh grade students, only 44 students were selected as a sample using a simple random technique. The data were collected through test, questionnaire and interview. The results of this study showed that students' achievement in listening is very poor. Students' difficulties in listening such as: unfamiliar words, complexities of grammatical structures, long spoken materials, unfamiliar topics, listening without repetition, the way speakers pronounces words, unable to quickly remember words or phrases they had just heard, the speed and accents of the speakers, focus of the students, environmental noises, and quality of recorded material. Then, the factors that cause these difficulties are lack of students practicing listening, students' lack of vocabulary mastery, students' lack of motivation, and noisy environment.

**Keywords:** Learning listening, Students' difficulties, SMAN 3 Praya

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the process of teaching and learning English, there are four macro skills that must be taught to students in order to master English, namely: listening, writing, speaking and reading. One of the most important receptive skills in English learning is listening. As stated by Rost in Hamouda (2013: 113) listening is a very important skill to be taught in language classes because it provides input for students and helps them develop their language. Listening is a very important ability to build effective and successful communication (Apgrianto, et. al., 2018). Furthermore, Rost (2002) stated listening is a communicative activity in which a person seeks to develop an acceptable understanding of what another person is saying for some communicative purpose.

Listening comprehension is an attempt to understand spoken language in one's mother tongue or second language as it relates to individual linguistic units (grammatical structures, words and phonemes), listener expectations, contexts and situations, background and also topics (Richards and Schimdt, 2002). Furthermore, Ariffudin (2020) stated that

listening comprehension is an intensive listening activity where a person must be able to capture, interpret and determine the main meaning of the message conveyed. In the process, students must maintain concentration and focus on key words or phrases in order to know the implied meaning.

When students experience difficulties in listening, it is natural to happen because listening to English is certainly different from listening to the language that is always used and English is not the student's mother tongue. It is the teacher's responsibility to overcome the difficulties faced by students as concluded by Abidin (2013) to be able to assist students in improving their listening abilities, the teacher must first understand students' difficulties in understanding listening texts and be able to teach effective listening strategies to students to help them overcome their listening difficulties. Difficulty is a condition characterized by the presence of obstacles in activities aimed at achieving a goal, requiring more active efforts to overcome these obstacles (Abdullah, 1983). It can be concluded that student's difficulties are some of the obstacles or problems faced by students which can result in the inhibition and failure of learning progress. Students can be said to be successful in listening

if they can identify and solve the difficulties they face, because solutions will be easier to find if students know the problems that affect their listening skills.

Wilson (2009) states difficulties in four categories, namely: characteristic of the message, speaker, listener and physical setting. For messages contained in listening materials, in fact that it will be more difficult to listen to a recorded message than to read the same message in written form. Often, listeners cannot predict what the speaker will say, whether it's from the news on television or even everyday conversation. In addition, the messages recorded on the tapes also cannot be heard at a slower speed, making it difficult for listeners to adjust to their ability to capture information from what they hear. Noise in the background of the recording and ambient noise can also distract listeners from the content of the message being heard.

Based on the information obtained by the writer from the English teacher at SMAN 3 Praya, most students in grade eleven have relatively low listening comprehension skills. It was proven by when the teacher gives listening exercises, students often ask to play back the audio recordings given even though the teacher has played the audio three times because students still cannot capture the essence of the audio recordings to answer questions. Besides that, there are still many students who get low scores or below the minimum passing standard (KKM) from the task of filling in the blanks of certain texts given through listening. It can be said that the difficulties faced by students in listening vary widely. Hence, this is the reason why the writer interested in doing the research entitled students' difficulties in learning listening at the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya.

## METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. Urdan (2005) defines the descriptive qualitative as a method used to describe the characteristic of a particular set of data. The

population of this research was the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya, totaling 121 students and the sample were XI IPS 1 and XI IPA 2, totaling 44 students. The instruments used to collect the data were test, questionnaire and interview. The test was used to assess students' achievement in listening and to identify common difficulties faced by students. The test consists of 20 questions. There were two parts of the test; 10 questions about dialogue (part 1), and 10 questions about monologue (part II). The questionnaire was designed by adopting the questionnaire from International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development of Hamouda (2013) consisting of 16 close-ended questions. This instrument is used to find the main possible problems related to learning listening. The interview aims to analyze the students' listening difficulties and the factors that cause these difficulties. The interview took 3-4 minutes depending on the respondent's time taking.

The data in this study were analyzed in several stages. First, individual student scores on the listening test were analyzed and categorized into five categories; very poor, poor, fair, good, very good. Then the percentage of each category is calculated. Second, the questionnaires that have been filled in by the students are analyzed and the students' answers are divided into five categories of listening difficulties as suggested by Hamouda (2013), namely: material, listeners, speakers, psychological aspects, and physical settings. Third, the recorded interview results were transcribed, analyzed and then matched with the results of the questionnaire. The final step is to analyze and elaborate on the results of all instruments to obtain valid results and draw conclusions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Students' Achievement on Listening Comprehension Test

The ability of 44 students in answering the listening test is presented in table below:

Table 1. The percentage of students' category in listening

No	Category	Score	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	80-100	0	0
2	Good	70-79	1	2.3%
3	Fair	56-69	1	2.3%
4	Poor	46-55	5	11.4%
5	Very Poor	0-45	37	84.1%

Table 1 displays the listening test performance of 44 students. It can be seen that the majority of the students receive 'very poor' scores. There are 37 students (84.1%) who scored in the very poor category and 5 students (11.4%) in the poor category. The number of students in the fair category is 1 (2.3%), and 1 (2.3%) in the good category. However, there are no students (0%) in the category of very good because the highest score that students received was 70. Based on the listening test results, it is possible to

conclude that listening achievement of the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya is very poor.

### Students Difficulties in Listening Comprehension Test

The common difficulties that students experience when listening were indicated by students' incorrect answers in the listening test. The data of students' incorrect answers in listening test is presented below:

Table 2. The data of students' incorrect answers in listening test

Part	Question Number	Topic	Number of Students Giving Incorrect Answer	Percentage
I	1	Listening to some dialogues and choose the best answer to the question	27	61.4%
	2		6	13.6%
	3		38	86.4%
	4		39	88.6%
	5		19	43.2%
	6		34	77.3%
	7		29	65.9%
	8		32	72.7%
	9		38	86.4%
	10		37	84.1%
II	11	Listening to some monologues and choose the best answer to the question	34	77.3%
	12		38	86.4%
	13		25	56.8%
	14		40	90.9%
	15		42	95.5%
	16		28	63.6%
	17		39	88.6%
	18		31	70.5%
	19		21	47.7%
	20		38	86.4%

The results of the students' listening test show the students' common difficulties in the listening test. The results of the listening test revealed that the most common difficulty encountered by students was listening to monologue. The data showed 21-42 (47,7% - 95,5%) of the students gave incorrect answers in listening to monolog questions. While there were 6-39 (13,6% – 88,6%) of the students gave incorrect answers in listening to dialog questions.

Furthermore, data for students' difficulties in listening were obtained from questionnaires. Students were given a questionnaire after completing the listening test, so that their statements are adjusted to their experience when answering the listening test. The statements in the questionnaire are divided into five aspects of

listening difficulties related to the material, listeners, speakers, psychological aspects and physical settings.

The first aspect concerns students' difficulties with listening materials. There are 84.1% (strongly agree and agree) of students think that the main difficulty they face when listening is they don't know the meaning of many foreign words, so they have difficulty understanding the material easily. Following that, 84.1% of students struggled in listening comprehension because they could not interpret the meaning of a long spoken material. Furthermore, 79.5% of students stated that grammatical structure complexities could interfere with their listening comprehension. Moreover, 72,7% of the students thought that

unfamiliar topic of listening materials could be causes of the listening difficulties because it made students difficult to understand the material easily.

The second aspect concerns students' difficulties in listening related to listeners. This means that the listener's ability affects their listening comprehension. There were 81.8% of students who stated that they could not gain a general understanding of spoken materials from the first listening. Furthermore, there were 75.0% of students stated that the difficulties they encountered when listening was a lack of ability to remember the words or phrases they had just heard. In addition, 56.8% of students had difficulty recognizing the words they had known when listening due to different pronunciation.

The third aspect concerns students' difficulties in listening related to speakers. There were 88.7% of students stated that they had difficulty understanding the entire material without repetition. To gain a better understanding of the listening materials, the students required more than one repetition. Following that, 86.4% of students stated that they had trouble understanding listening material properly when the speaker spoke too fast. Furthermore, 81.8% of students thought that various accents of the speakers made students difficult to understand well the messages being conveyed. Moreover, there were 79.5% of students experiencing difficulties because speakers did not pronounce the words clearly so that students were unable to capture and understand the meaning of these words.

The fourth aspect concerns students' difficulties in listening related to psychological aspects. This aspect dealt with students' feelings and concentration while listening. There were 88.6% of students stated they lost concentration while listening because they were thinking about the meaning of new words. Furthermore, 86.4% of students could not concentrate during the listening test because they were looking for the answers while listening to the material, in this case dialogues and monologues, causing students to answer incorrectly. Moreover, 70.4% of students stated they felt worried and nervous when they did not understand the materials.

The last aspect concerns students' difficulties in listening related to physical settings. There were 81.8% of students stated that their ability to focus on the material would be disturbed if the environment around them was

noisy. In addition, 65.9% of students stated that unclear sound caused by a low-quality CD player interfered with their understanding when listening to the material spoken by the speaker.

### **The Factors Contributing to Students' Difficulties in Listening Comprehension**

The writer conducted interviews to get students' perspectives on the factors that caused their listening difficulties. The results of the interviews show that students perceive English lessons, especially listening as a skill that is difficult to learn, so they experience many difficulties when exposed to listening. In line with the students' assumptions, the authors found several factors that contributed to students' difficulties in listening. The first, related to the listening materials. The students struggle to understand the material because they did not know the meaning of some words spoken by the speaker. In addition, spoken texts that are too long and complex also be a factor causing students' difficulties in understanding listening material.

The second, related to the listener. Students have difficulty comprehending listening materials because of students' lack of vocabulary. They also revealed that they often could not recognize words that they knew the meaning of because the pronunciation was different when listening. This difficulty is caused by the lack of listening practice by students both inside and outside the English class. The third, students' difficulties related to the speakers. Students struggled to understand what the speaker was saying if they spoke too fast. This is because students do not get used to listening to English by utilizing media such as YouTube, English films and so on to improve their listening skills. The fourth, the causes of students' difficulties in listening related to psychological aspects. This aspect referred to the concentration and feelings of the students. The majority of students stated that they lost concentration if they searched for answers while listening to the materials at the same time. In addition, the lack of motivation that students have creates a feeling of laziness which also affects the level of concentration of students when doing listening. The last, the causes of students' difficulties in listening related to physical settings. The students stated that environmental factors would influence their listening comprehension. As a result, if the situation inside and outside the classroom was

noisy, they would be unable to concentrate on the listening materials.

Furthermore, students also revealed that the most difficult questions in the listening test were listening to the monologue. This is due to the length of the monologue material and the fact that many words are unfamiliar to students, causing them to lose concentration and have difficulty understanding the material.

## Discussion

The result of listening test indicated that students' achievement on listening comprehension test was very poor. The cause of the low achievement of the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya in listening cannot be separated from the lack of practice that students do both at school and outside of school and also the lack of intensity of listening exercises provided by the teacher. Rost (1994) explains that in language classes, listening is very important to be taught because it plays a role in providing input for students, thus any learning cannot begin without understanding the input correctly. This statement is in line with the results found by the writer that students will not be able to answer listening questions properly and correctly if students are not used to practicing listening which is a language input tool for students.

Next, the result of listening test also indicated that the most common difficulties which were faced by the students were listening to monolog. Students stated that listening to monologues was more difficult than listening to dialogues because the monologue material was too long and contained many unfamiliar words, so that the monologue material sounded monotonous, causing them lose their concentration and have difficulty understanding the material. During the listening process carried out by the listener, various elements of the message are stored in the mind and the listener tries to deduce the meaning and determine what should be stored, so that short-term memory becomes heavy and not optimal (Hedge, 2000).

Furthermore, students' listening difficulties are divided into several aspects of listening difficulties as stated by Hamouda (2013), namely: material, listeners, speakers, psychological aspects and physical settings. Students' difficulties in listening related to the listening materials are unfamiliar words, complexities of grammatical structures, unfamiliar topic and long spoken text. Students'

difficulties related to the listener are unable to grasp the gist of the spoken text on first listening, difficult to recognize the words they are familiar with while listening because different pronunciation and have trouble remembering a word or phrase they just heard. Students' difficulties related to the speakers are difficult to understand the meaning of words that are not clearly pronounced by the speakers, unable to understand the materials if the speakers spoke too fast, difficult to understand the whole materials without repetition and difficult to understand well the messages because various accents of the speakers. Students' difficulties related to the psychological aspects are students became worried and nervous when they did not understand the material, students became distracted when they considered the meanings of new words during listening and students were unable to concentrate in doing listening because they search for the answers while listened to the materials. Students' difficulties related to the physical settings are noisy environment and unclear sound caused by a low-quality CD player.

The results of this research shows similarities with the results of previous study by Agnes Lestyo Rini (2017) where the difficulties faced by students when listening are influenced by limited English vocabulary, unclear pronunciation, native speaker accent, classroom condition, lack of motivation and lack of concentration. In this research, it was shown that eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya also experienced similar problems, there were 84.1% of students had difficulty due to limited vocabulary, 79.5% of students had difficulty because the speaker pronounce words unclearly, 81.8% of students had difficulty due to the various accent used by the speaker, and 88.6% of students had difficulty due to loss of concentration. Apart from these similarities, the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya also face other difficulties which vary greatly as previously described.

There are several factors that contributed to students' difficulties in listening comprehension. First, spoken texts that are too long and complex could affect the students' listening comprehension. Students' concentration can be disrupted by long spoken texts because they tend to think longer and are distracted by their surroundings, making it difficult for them to interpret what the speaker said. This is in line with the statements of Carroll (1977), it takes

extraordinary abilities and strategies to be able to understand texts that contain a lot of information because it is difficult to remember everything.

Second, lack of the students' vocabulary mastery. Students struggle to understand the material because they did not know the meaning of some words spoken by the speaker. While listening, sometimes students find unfamiliar words that cause them stop listening and think about the meaning of those words. This pause causes students to miss some important information from the audio so that it affects students' understanding. This is reinforced by the statement of Underwood (1989), the tendency to stop listening and concentrate on each word individually before deciding on its meaning can hinder comprehension.

Third, lack of students' practices listening both inside and outside the English class. Students difficult to recognize words that they knew the meaning of because the pronunciation was different when listening. In addition, students difficult to understand what the speakers were saying if they spoke too fast. This is in line with the statement of Underwood (1989), that the biggest difficulty in listening comprehension is that the speaker's speed is uncontrollable by the listener. The difficulties were caused by the students were rarely practice listening inside and outside the English class because students consider English especially listening as a difficult skill to learn, so they don't want to practice English listening apart from what they learn in class. This resulted in students' listening skills not increasing, having little vocabulary and students not being familiar with the speed and pronunciation of English native speakers.

Fourth, lack of students' motivation. Students said that they could not concentrate because of a lack of motivation, they felt lazy to do listening and their desire to finish listening quickly made them unable to concentrate while listening. This is reinforced by Hermawan's (2012) statement that in the listening process, the listener's motivation and feelings are also very influential. Listeners will listen well and more effectively if the listeners need and are interested in what is heard, and vice versa. The last, noisy environment. Students claimed that the condition inside and outside classroom would impact their listening comprehension, if the environment were noisy they could not concentrate on the listening materials.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the research data that has been described, it can be seen that the achievement of the eleventh grade students of SMAN 3 Praya in listening is very poor. This is evidenced by the fact that 37 out of a total of 44 students (84.1%) got a score in the very poor category. This is caused by students facing many difficulties when listening such as: unfamiliar words, complexities of grammatical structures, unfamiliar topics, long spoken text, difficult to understand the materials from the first listening, difficult to recognize the words they are familiar with because different pronunciation, difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounce clearly by the speakers, difficult to remember words or phrases they had just heard, unable to understand the materials if the speakers spoke too fast and with various accents, difficult to understand listening materials without unrepeatd recorded text. Moreover, students felt worried and nervous when they don't understand the material, students lose concentration when they consider the new words' meaning, students unable to concentrate because search for the answers while listen to the materials, noisy environment and unclear recorded materials. The factors that contribute to students' difficulties in listening comprehension are the length and complexity of spoken texts, lack of mastery of students' vocabulary, lack of students' listening practice both inside and outside English class, lack of student motivation, and noisy environment.

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