

IMRPOVING STUDENT'S LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH KEYWORD STRATEGY

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Abstract

Listening as the primary skill in learning English plays very important role. This study investigates if Keyword strategy can improve students' listening comprehension. The study involved 22 students of the second semester Islamic Law Department students at STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman taken by using cluster random sampling technique. The study was a pre-experimental research with one group pretest-posttest design. The research was carried out into three stages: pretest, treatments by using Keyword Strategy, and posttest. The score of pretest was 65.23 (Sufficient) and the posttest score was 77.27 (Good) which further analyzed with a paired simple T-test by using SPSS. The results show that the probability $0.00 < 0.05$ indicating that there is a significant improvement on students' listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword Strategy.

Keywords: *Improvement; Keyword Strategy; Listening Comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

As a foreign language, English is mandatorily learned as a formal subject in schools and higher education in Indonesia. The 4 major skills of English like Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are taught in integrated way. Yonantha (2018: 13) states that listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be considered and integrated to teach as an achievement to be reached by English teachers or candidate of English teachers.

Listening as the first skill acquired plays a very important role in gaining vocabulary, information, and experience. Morley in Yonantha and Khan (2020: 89) states that people listen twice as much as speak, four times more than read, and five times more than write. A better listening is with comprehension. Not only sound is listened, but there is also a process of understanding the information from the received sound. Richard etc (1999: 216) explains that listening comprehension is a process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language.

Listening, for some people, might be the perception of sounds, but it actually includes comprehension of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and connected discourse. Learners will build the meaning from lower level sounds to words to the grammatical relationships to lexical meaning and lastly get the final message. Some may argue that the listening process takes more time at every stage: decoding, rehearsal in short-term memory, organization of information for storage, and the relation of information from the long term memory. The most important thing in human communication is the ability to match perceived meaning with intended meaning. That we called as listening comprehension.

There are different processes of listeners to comprehend what they are listening to. The processes are bottom-up, top-down, and interactive processing. According to Richards, the processes are in the following:

1) Bottom-Up Processing

Bottom-up processing refers to the use of the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Listening comprehension is begun with the data receiving. It, then, is analyzed into some levels of organization including sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts – until meaning is derived. A process of decoding is viewed as the comprehension here.

2) Top-Down Processing

Top-down processing involves the use of prior knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Bottom-up processing always goes from language to meaning while top-down processing always goes from meaning to language. The prior knowledge is required for top-down processing which may be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, situational or contextual knowledge.

3) Interactive Processing

Interactive process involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. Listening comprehension is the result of the interaction between both processes.

There are several purposes of listening comprehension according to Weir in Suporsirisin (2007:28) such as: 1) Listening for gist; 2) Listening for the main idea or important information; 3)

Listening for distinguishing the main idea from supporting details; 4) Listening for specifics, including recall the important details; and 5) Listening for determining a speaker's attitude. While Galvin in Longman written in Underwood (1989:4) states that there are five reasons for listening. The students will have generally fail under one or other these categories: 1) To engage in social rituals; 2) To exchange information, 3) To exert control, 4) To share feelings, and 5) To enjoy yourself.

Listening may be experienced differently by one to another person. For native speakers or learners, listening is not a big deal, but for foreigners or those who learn English as a foreign language, listening is one of the nightmares. They are not accustomed with it nor have some ideas about the sounds of words they hear which are different with the spellings. Some may have troubles with catching the ideas or the key information of what they are listening to. Furthermore, foreign learners do really need to be able to have the comprehension when they hear native speakers' conversation or even they have the native speakers as the interlocutor in the real situations as Chastain (1971:1) defined the listening comprehension as the ability to understand the speech of native speakers at normal speed in listening situations. Sacroba (1999: 12) noted that listening comprehension is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Besides, The EFL and ESL students tend to have difficulty understanding and recalling information contained in spoken and written discourse when they lack familiarity with the topic while language learners do really need to be familiar with and attend to some features of spoken English because if they do not do so, their listening processes will be negatively influenced and their comprehension much hindered.

There are some factors that may cause the difficulties for listener in listening comprehension. They are:

1. Characteristic of the listener: including the memory capacity, metacognitive strategy, and experience.
2. Characteristic of the passage: it is about the length of passage, complexity, organization, and auditory of the passage.
3. Characteristic of the testing conditions: when the listeners should listen in the limited time, they also should listen to multiple hearing at the same time without any note taking.

Achieving a comprehension in listening is not a piece of cake. It needs practices and experiences. The more learners do, the better their comprehension will be. It is believed that if students listen to the target language all day, they will improve their listening comprehension skill through the experience (Mendelsohn, 1998:81). On that account, the students' prior knowledge as well as experience is playing the important role in improving listening comprehension and reading comprehension as well. One of the best ways to improve listening comprehension is by choosing a right strategy. Strategy itself is a set of operations which a learner chooses to use to direct or check his or her own comprehension. It enables learners to expand their ability to improve their comprehension in learning English especially in listening (Peterson in Murcia, 2001: 90).

One of the best way in enhancing students' listening comprehension by using *Keyword strategy*.

Oxford (1990: 62) states that Keyword strategy combines sounds and image where learners can remember more easily what they hear or read in the new language. The Keyword strategy is a memory and comprehension strategy that students can use in any setting where they need to learn information. Nation and Newton (2008: 135) added that keyword combined with vocabulary cards is useful to have a phrase containing the new word along with the word. The Keyword strategy links the form of an unknown word to its meaning by using a keyword which is usually taken from the first language. By introducing them vocabularies relate to what they are going to hear. It makes them comprehend more what they hear.

The procedures of Keyword strategy are as follow.

1. The teacher brainstorms some vocabularies mention by the students about current topic that is going to be learned.

For example: the topic is about “Penyengat Mosque”. The teacher may ask any key words that are related to the topic. Perhaps, some of the will say: *historical, palace, big, yellow mosque, Malay icon*, Etc.

2. These key words are written on the board by the students one by one.
3. Afterwards, teacher can play the audio cassette or file about that topic for several times.
4. After listening, the students are asked to check whether their familiar key words are suitable with what they listen or not.
5. The correct key words are used by each student to make sentences based on the audio they listen by using their own words. The sentences may vary among the students but the information remains the same.
6. At the end, each student is asked to have a presentation retelling about the information they get from the audio cassette or file.
7. Finally, the teacher confirm the correct information and clarify the incorrect information.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research carried out in this paper was a pre-experimental research with a one group pretest-posttest design. According to Gay and Airasian (2000: 372) a group of respondents was selected then is pretested, exposed to treatment and finally post tested. Thus, the sample of this research was a class consisting of 22 students of the second semester Islamic Law department of STAIN Sultan Abdurrahman Kepulauan Riau. English is taught as a general subject in this department that is taught once a week. They were chosen based on their class where the researcher carried out a cluster random sampling technique in choosing the group/class. Gay and Airasian in Yonantha (2018: 15) states that cluster sampling randomly selects group, not individual, and all members of group have similar characteristics.

These research was carried out into three stages. Firstly, these students were given a pretest of listening comprehension on describing person before being exposed with Keyword strategy. Secondly, they were given 3 meetings of treatment of teaching listening by using Keyword strategy. And thirdly, they were post tested to see whether there is an improvement on their listening comprehension.

The score of pretest and posttest were firstly classified into some categories depicted in Tabel 1

below.

Table 1: Students' Score Classification

| <i>Score Range</i> | <i>Category</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 80-100 | Very Good |
| 66-79 | Good |
| 56-65 | Sufficient |
| 40-55 | Less |
| 30-39 | Fail |

After being classified, the score of pretest and posttest were further analyzed statistically by using paired sample T-test. This is to prove one of the hypotheses below:

H₀: There is no significant improvement on students' listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword strategy

H_a: There is a significant improvement on students' listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword strategy.

If the probability < 0.05, it means null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and vice versa.

FINDINGS

This research was carried out to investigate whether there is an improvement on students' listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword strategy. The data of pretest and posttest score can be presented into Table 2 below.

Table 2: Students' Pretest and Posttest Score

| No | Students | Score | |
|-----------|----------|---------|----------|
| | | Pretest | Posttest |
| 1 | S 1 | 65 | 70 |
| 2 | S 2 | 65 | 70 |
| 3 | S 3 | 70 | 80 |
| 4 | S 4 | 65 | 70 |
| 5 | S 5 | 55 | 80 |
| 6 | S 6 | 60 | 80 |
| 7 | S 7 | 60 | 80 |
| 8 | S 8 | 70 | 80 |
| 9 | S 9 | 70 | 85 |
| 10 | S 10 | 65 | 80 |
| 11 | S 11 | 50 | 60 |
| 12 | S 12 | 75 | 75 |
| 13 | S 13 | 70 | 80 |
| 14 | S 14 | 65 | 70 |
| 15 | S 15 | 60 | 80 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|------|--------------|--------------|
| 16 | S 16 | 60 | 65 |
| 17 | S 17 | 75 | 95 |
| 18 | S 18 | 50 | 90 |
| 19 | S 19 | 75 | 80 |
| 20 | S 20 | 75 | 85 |
| 21 | S 21 | 75 | 80 |
| 22 | S 22 | 60 | 65 |
| Total Score | | 1435 | 1700 |
| Mean Score | | 65.23 | 77.27 |

From Table 2 above it can be seen that the mean score of pretest is 65.23 while the posttest mean score is 77.27. The pretest score can be categorized into **sufficient** while the posttest score can be stated as **Good** category.

These score is then analyzed by using paired T-Test with SPSS and the result can be seen in Table 3 as follow.

Table 3: Paired T-Test Results

| | Paired Differences | | | | | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|--------|-------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pre test-post test | 12.040 | 8.521 | 1.440 | 9.644 | 15.498 | 8.728 | 22 | .000 |

From Table 3 above, it can be depicted that the difference of mean score between pretest and posttest is 12.040, Std. Deviation is 8.521, Std. Error Mean is 1.440, the lower interval is 9.644 and the upper interval is 15.498. Then, the T score is 8.728, the df is 22 respondents and the Sig. (2 - tailed) is 0.000.

To interpret this data, the probability (sig.2 - tailed) is used to be compared with the probability of 5%. If the probability (sig.2 - tailed) < 0.05 showing that null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and vice versa If the probability (sig.2 - tailed) > 0.05 showing that null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected.

From Table 3, the probability (sig.2 - tailed) score is 0.00 < 0.05. It can be depicted that null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. It means that there is a significant improvement on student's listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword strategy.

From the treatments, the findings show that Keyword strategy brings some benefits like:

1. This strategy is very applicable in any level of listening.
2. Prior knowledge of students is brainstormed before the listening activities and this helps students to link their prior information with the new information.

3. Students are more active in the classroom because each of them is given the same opportunity.
4. The skills of English are integrated even though listening skill is stressed, but the students can activate and integrate other skills like reading when they can see all the key words written on the board; speaking and writing when students are asked to retell the information they get into written or spoken forms.
5. The prediction skill is activated due to enhancing students' awareness of the upcoming information compared with the key words they predict.
6. Their comprehension is guided at the end by the teacher's confirmation and clarification in order to avoid misunderstanding.

Besides, there is a weakness of using this strategy. It is when some students may not have any information or prior knowledge about the topic learned on the day. It is quite unfair for the sake of comprehension. Sadighi and Zare in Hasan, Gushendra & Yonantha (2017: 3), in their survey, state that there are some common problems that learners may face in listening. They are **lack of phonological awareness, vocabulary, speed, motivation, understanding, and associating the prior knowledge with listening materials**. Hasan, et al (2017: 4) added that prior knowledge is also called as relevant background knowledge, or just plain experience, when students make connections to what they are reading as well as listening, their comprehension increases. The weakness on activating prior knowledge before listening activities surely can be helpful. Then, those problems can also be avoided by choosing popular topics, overall, this strategy is very useful to improve students' listening comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From all information depicted above, the investigation about improving students' listening comprehension through Keyword strategy is confirmed that there is a significant improvement on students' listening comprehension after being taught by using Keyword strategy. It is showed from the probability score $0.00 < 0.05$.

It is suggested to other researchers to investigate the influence of prior knowledge on students' listening comprehension and how to improve students' prior knowledge in listening.

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