Exploring EFL Students' Problems in Listening Comprehension

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Listening is a challenging skill for many EFL learners. They seem to do the assignment without showing good comprehension on their answers. This research aims to find out the students' problems in listening comprehension and identify the factors contributing to the problems. The second semester students in academic year 2017/2018 are the subject of the research. The data were collected by using observation, interview and documentation. The results of the research showed that the students still have low listening comprehension. The most difficult indicator of listening comprehension is making inference. There are only 28% students can answer the questions related making inference. The students also have low confidence in listening skill. They cannot concentrate well in listening to the spoken texts. Those problems are influenced by two factors, internal and external factors. Understanding students' problems leads to the idea of providing better strategies and materials in learning activities.

Keywords: confidence, problem, listening comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is an active skill that has many processes. Listening comprehension is as a "highly complex problem-solving activity" that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills Byrnes (1984). In addition, listening comprehension is as the vehicle to get elements of grammatical structure and new vocabulary to be contextualized in communicative discourse. Many students cannot pass the passing grade, and must rejoin the class on the semester.

Some definitions of listening are stated by the experts. Listening is a vital mental capacity one of the principal means by which we understand and take a part in the world around us. Marleni (2016) states that listening is a language skill with a goal to understand spoken text, and build the language skill to communicate in the real situation. The active skill produces the language. The learners know how to express the language. Meanwhile, Brown (1991) states that listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get the meaning from something we hear. Marleni (2016) says that listening comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning of spoken text which is called as the extensive listening or meaning focused listening which concerned on the understanding of meaning with a top down approach as the basic skill to master other language skills. Therefore, comprehension will usually be found in the learners mind. It is clear that listening comprehension is not only a process of identifying sounds, but also a process of catching the idea of the spoken text whether it is stated explicitly or implicitly. Nunan (2003) says that listening was seen as a major source of comprehensible input. Language learning textbooks began including listening activities that were not simply presentation of language to be produced.

They were listening activities for input, the beginning of the kinds of listening tasks common in books today. Brown and Abey Wickrama (2010) explain that in listening comprehension, a teacher can use multiple choice tests. In this case, the learners should listen to the text before answering the questions. Listening comprehension test can be used to measure students appropriate with indicators in listening comprehension as the following: finding the general information, identifying the setting, identifying the problem, identifying the resolution in the story, making inference, and finding the meaning of words.

Problem is a different condition between it should be with what is really going on, between theory and practice, between the rules of the execution, of plans to the executive Sugiyono (2009). Furthermore, Abdurrahman (1999) states two problems in learning process; 1) *Developmental learning disabilities* is a difficult problem to be identified by parents or teachers, because of no a systematic measurement for that. This problem is caused by prerequisite skills. Prerequisite skills are the skills which must be mastered by the students first then other skills. 2) *Academic learning disabilities* is the problem which caused by the failures in academic learning which included the following skills; reading, speaking, listening, and writing. This problem will be realized by parents or teachers when the students failed in one of the academic skills. The problems which were analyzed in this research deals with academic learning that is the students' problem in listening comprehension which can be measured and known by the lecturer. Buck (2001)identifies some problems in listening tasks such as finding the meaning of unknown vocabularies, identifying the unfamiliar topics, and rate of fast speech. In another hand, there are many causes of the problems that affect the listening comprehension. Underwood (1990) organizes the problem in listening comprehension are in the following: firstly, the lack of control the speed of the speaker in the recording, and practically the listener get problem to control the speed of the speaker. Many English students believe that the most difficult things in listening comprehension is that the lack control the speed of the speaker by the students when listening activity. There is an impossible thing for the listeners to control the speed from source which cannot be controlled. Such as, the students is listening to a radio or television broadcast, here they cannot ask for a slower speed through the media. Secondly, the inability to get repetition often becomes problem for the learner. No repetition is the condition the listeners must get when listening to an uncontrolled source because listeners cannot always listen to the speakers for repeating the speech. They cannot ask for repetition when listening to the radio or watching television, and etc.

Abdurrahman (2008:11-12) states two problems in learning process; 1) Developmental learning disabilities is a difficult problem to be identified by parents or teachers, because of no a systematic measurement for that. This problem is caused by prerequisite skills. Prerequisite skills are the skills which must be mastered by the students first then other skills. 2) Academic learning disabilities is the problem which caused by the failures in academic learning which included the following skills; reading, speaking, listening, and writing. This problem will be realized by parents or teachers when the students failed in one of the academic skills. The problems which were analyzed in this research deals with academic learning that is the students' problem in listening comprehension which can be measured and known by the lecturer.

Thirdly, the limited vocabulary becomes problem for the listeners in understanding the spoken text. It is the most significant problems for the students in listening class. When listening to spoken text through uncontrollable source, the students cannot understand the speech with word that they are unknown for them. They need to know the vocabulary to understand the spoken text. When the speaker in the recording uses words which the students do not know, they will get difficulties to comprehend what they are listening to. Thinking the unknown words can disturbed the students, finally they stop and think about meaning of the word and then, the will miss the next part of the speech they are listening to. Fourthly, the failure to recognize signals can make the students confused about the spoken text. There is an example when giving directions; someone needs to use sequencing words by using words like first, second, and third to tell the information in order. If the students do not know the signals, the will get difficulties to understand the directions. In this case, the signals will help them to indicate that the speaker is moving from a part to another part, giving examples, or repeating a statement. Fifthly, miss interpretation becomes problem which is found with listeners who low background knowledge to understand the context of the spoken text they are listening to. If students, who do not know the context of snow, and they hear the sentence, so bad that there was no students in the school understand that. They might get difficulties to interpret the spoken text correctly if they have no experienced related snow. In this case, a communication will be connected if the listener has some background knowledge when talking something.

Sixthly, the ability to be focus in listening comprehension, the concentration level of the listener can lead to students becoming bored in the class. When students are listening to a spoken text from a poor device, it can cause listening hard and boring for them. They will get difficulties to concentrate through the activity. Sometimes they feel that listening activity is very tiring. Finally, less learning behaviors that the learner has get from their teachers becomes problem in comprehending a spoken text. Lecturer wants to see their students understand everything in listening class. Students will be worry if they fail to understand the text. The students do not confident if they do not understand the text and complete the task successfully.

There are two factors influencing the students' problem in learning process. The factors are 1) Internal factors are divided into five classes. They are Physical development disorder, mental disorder, emotional disorder, and some unusual learning habits. 2) External factors are the high target on the curriculum,

big classes, more extracurricular activities, problem between lecturer and students, unsuitable teaching strategy, and family problem. Teng (2002) states that the two factors that influence listening comprehension are internal and external factors. The internal factor is the factor which comes from inside the learners. On the other hand, the external factor is the factor which comes from outside of the learners, such as the speaker, stimulus, and context.

The students of English Study Program of University Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai still have problem in Listening Comprehension as the subject. It is proved that there are 5 students who cannot reach the passing grade in academic year 2016/2017. In this case, 45% students got "B-". Based on the data, the students who were failed in the subject explained that the learning process is not maximal with various reasons, either the environment or material in the class. They said that the material is too difficult and some of them are lazy to join this class. Therefore, it is important to find out the problems which cause the bed score and failed students in Listening as the subject.

METHODS

The qualitative approach was used to describe the characteristic of the data. In this case, the qualitative research is a case study because of its characteristics and result descriptive data. This study attempts to explore certain information about a phenomenon or case of a subject. The case of this research was students' problem in listening comprehension at the first year of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. There were 29 students; 25 female and 4 male. The data were collected by observation, interview, and documentation. All the data were analyzed qualitatively by using coding, and the researcher put the most significant answers as the themes to be discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the observation on the teaching and learning process in Listening Comprehension class at the Second Semester of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai in academic year 2017/2018, the researcher got some data which show the teaching and learning process. Listening Comprehension is a course which must be taken at the second semester of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. In this subject, the students will learn to comprehend the information in short and long conversation and monologue. In this case, the teaching and learning process do not only run in the language laboratory, but most of the teaching and learning process are in the class. The lecturer uses media such as *active speaker* and projector outside the language laboratory. The lecturer used classroom and language laboratory in teaching students. There was a reason for the lec-

turer to use classroom and language laboratory; to give different atmosphere for the students in teaching learning process. Furthermore, the students can listening the spoken text naturally.

The students are not ready and not active in joining the learning process, because there were some students do not have note book coming to the class. The activeness of the students can be showed in teaching and learning process. There were almost no students gave response and interaction between the students and lecturer. There were only 3 students gave question to the lecturer.

In learning process, the students were not active to give response or answer. They gave various reasons for that. Most of them said that before joining English Study Program, they did not like English. They also have low English language skill. Then, the lecturer never gives a test before coming to the class. Based on the observation, the researcher got the data which can be seen in the following:

The Competency of Lecturer in Teaching

Based on the observation sheet, the lecturer taught the students well. There was a lecturer who taught Listening Comprehension. She is a woman. She has English Education background. She is a Master of English Education. The lecturer has various strategies in teaching process in Listening Comprehension Class. Based on the interview, she uses some media such as recording and video as the media of learning. She has good skill in designing the learning activity by using the media. She is also a confident person as the lecturer. She gives time for the students to have discussion inside and outside the class.

The lecturer has various strategies in teaching the listening comprehension by using various media in language laboratory or classroom. Personally, the lecturer shows good knowledge and skill in teaching. She also has good confidence in the class such as;in answering or giving challenge to the students. The lecturer also has good work attitude by coming on time to the classroom.

Based on the observation, the learning activity designed by the lecturer in the class is good. The lecturer uses various media in the class such as; sound system in the laboratory, sound system, media social, recording, and video. In this case, the students are motivated to come to the class and join the listening activity.

The Students' Activity in Listening Class

Based on the observation, all of the students joined the class. There were 2 students came late in the first meeting. On the next meeting, all of them come on time and join the class. In the learning process, not all of the students paid attention when the lecturer gave explanation. Some students were busy to ask their friends. They looked like confused on the explanation. In the laboratory, they wore headset to listen the recording. Sometimes, they watched video shared by the lecturer. They got

opportunity to listen the material more than 1 time. Based on the interview, the lecturer said that it is as the exercise for the students to become accustomed to listening spoken English. When listening and doing the exercise, the students needed a long time and had discussion with their friends. They were busy to discuss the answer, although the lecturer asked them to do the exercise alone. In this case, there were some students cheating in the class. Based on the data, the result of observation on the students is in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 | The Result of Observation on the Students

Component	Score	Percentage	Category
Paying attention	70	70%	Good
Make note	60	60%	Enough
Giving questions	62	62%	Enough
Active in answering questions	50	50%	Enough
Do the exercise	67	67%	Good

The Students' Listening Comprehension

Test, which was validated instrument by the expert, was be tested to the second semester students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai in academic year 2017/2018. It was done on 25 May 2018. There were 29 students join the test. The students score can be seen in Figure 1.
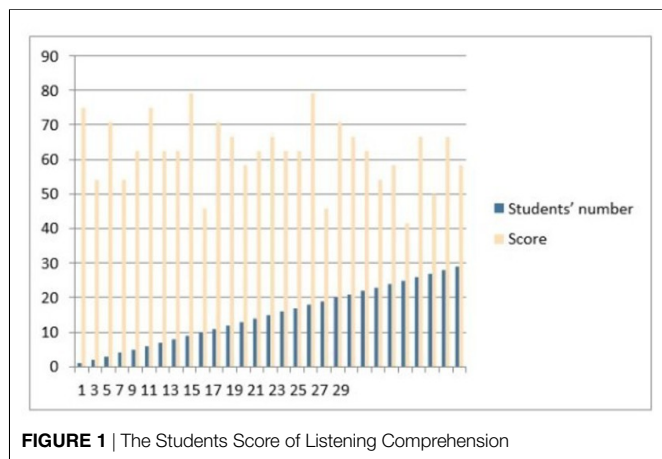

FIGURE 1 | The Students Score of Listening Comprehension

Based on **Figure 1**, the average score is 62.5. The highest score is 79 and the lowest score is 41. There are 4 students got score <50, and 7 students got >70. In this case, there are no students got score 80 until 100. The analysis of the students' listening comprehension of each indicator as the following table 2.

Based on **Table 2**, it is clear that the most difficult indicator of listening comprehension is making inference. On another hand, it is easy for the students to find out the setting of the

story and find the meaning of words. In this case, the average score is 62.5. Based on the analysis of the students' listening comprehension above, it can be concluded that the students got problem in listening comprehension. Especially in making inference based on the spoken text they listened to.

The Students' Problem in Listening Comprehension at English Study Program of University Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai

The researcher analyzed the data which was collected by using questionnaire and interview. The validated instruments are used to find out the problems problem in listening comprehension and factors influenced the students' problem in listening comprehension. The students' problems are in the following explanation:

Low Self-Rating to Listening Comprehension

In questionnaire, the students were asked to have self-rating in listening comprehension. Based on the data, there were 13 students who rate themselves in good level, 13 in average, and 2 in poor. In this case, they think that listening comprehension is an important skill. However, most of them stated that listening comprehension is difficult. Therefore, they think that listening activity is not interesting and make them boring. Fewer students are excited in listening comprehension. They often receive sufficient training in English listening comprehension given by the lecturer. In this case, most of the students never have strategy in listening activity. It is clear that the students have no confidence to rate themselves in excellent level.

The Students' Perceptions Related to Other Language Skills

Based on the data, the students have their own perception related to other language skill, such as speaking, reading, and writing. For reading skill, there are only 2 confident students who rate their selves in excellent level. There are 15 in good level, 10 in average, 1 in poor level. On another hand, for writing skill there is no confident student to rate their selves in excellent level. There are 5 in good level, 17 in average, 4 in poor level. For speaking skill, there are 3 students who rate their selves in excellent level, 8 in good level, 14 in average, 4 in poor level. Based on this fact, the students still have low confidence on their language skill.

Using Strategy to Enhance Listening Skills

This statement is important to see whether the students have strategy to increase their listening skill. Based on the data analysis, there are some strategies that the students have in enhancing listening skill. There are 14 students always listen to the lecturer and classmates use English in the class. Then, there are 20 students use cassettes of CD at home to listen English lan-

TABLE 2 | TheAnswer of the Students of Each Indicator of Listening Comprehension

No	Items to be Tested	Test Items	Percentage
1.	Finding the general information	1,7,13,19	73.3%
2.	Identifying the setting	2,8,14,20	84.5%
3.	Identifying the problem	3,9,15,21	60.3%
4.	Identifying the resolution in the story	4,10,16,22	46.6%
5.	Making inference	5,11,17,23	28.4%
6.	Finding the meaning of words	6,12,18,24	81.9%

guage study. There are 19 students never use radio channels in studying English. But there are 23 students like to use voice chat on the internet communicating with friends in English. They also use media social as the media for communication by using English.

Students' Statement about the Content of the Listening Text

Depth information is needed to identify the students' problems in listening comprehension. Based on the data, the students have problem in understanding the content of listening text. There are 27 students stated that long spoken text interfere their listening comprehension. All of the students feel difficult to get the information in a long spoken text. Then, they feel fatigue and distracted when listen to a long spoken text. In addition, 14 students feel difficult to understand listening texts with unfamiliar topic. 28 students understand the spoken text by experience and background knowledge of the topic, but it is difficult for them to understand every single word of incoming speech and the listening passage.

The Students' Concentration

Listening activity needs concentration for the students. Based on the data, the second semester students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai feel that concentration is important in listening comprehension. 27 students lose focus on the talk when getting an expected answer in your head. They cannot concentrate because looking for the answers, and listening to the dialogue at the same time. 28 students stated that they lose concentration when listening long text and thinking the meaning of new words and questions while listening activity. Then, the poor quality recording always disturb their concentration in listening process.

Listening Problems Related to Listener

Based on the data analysis, there is only 2 students never feel difficult to get general information of the spoken text from the first listening. When listening, 27 students feel difficult to predict what would come next. All of the students feel difficult to remember words or phrases and recognize the words quickly because of the way of the speaker pronounced. All of them understand some words in writing, but when listening them in a stream of speech, they found it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins. There is only 1 students never feel difficult when listening to English without text and find it difficult to answer information questions/ WH questions.

Listening Problems Related to the Speaker

There are many people cannot understand the spoken text without looking the speaker. 29 students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai find it difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses. They also find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly. 100% students find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language. They find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak with various accents and speak too fast. All of them feel difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough and without repetition.

Listening problems related to the physical setting

Physical setting helps the students in listening comprehension. Based on the data, 29 students feel difficult to concentrate with noises around. They feel disturbed by unclear sounds resulting from poor-quality equipment. The atmosphere around the students influence the students in listening comprehension. The result of analysis data explains that the second semester students of English Study Program of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai have problem in listening comprehension. The students still have low listening comprehension. The most difficult indicators of listening comprehension for the students is making inference based on the spoken text. Based on the data analysis, there are two factors influence the students' problem in listening comprehension. Those problems cover internal factors and internal factors.

Internal factors are the factors which related to the students as the listeners. The problems come from inside their selves. Based on explanation above, the researchers get the internal factors which influence the students' problem in listening comprehension are the students' self-rating to listening comprehension is not in excellent level. They put their selves in average level. It means they have low confidence in listening comprehension. Then, they also have low perceptions related to other

language skills. In this case, they have less effort to get good listening comprehension. They have some strategies to increase their listening comprehension by listening to the lecturer and friends, and using internet and media social as media for communication.

The students also got problem in understanding the content of the listening text. Long spoken text becomes a challenge for the students. They cannot get information in long spoken text. Then, the students cannot concentrate well in listening process. They lose concentration when listening long spoken text. There are other problems related to listener, such as; feel difficult to get general information, make inference based on the spoken text, difficult to remember words quickly.

External factors are the factors which influence the students' problem in listening comprehension from out of the students their selves. The problems related to the physical setting. The atmosphere around the students influence them in listening comprehension. They feel difficult to concentrate with noises around. In addition, the unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality equipment also make the students feel difficult to have good listening comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, the conclusion of the research are in the following: The second semester students of English Study Porgram of University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai have problems in listening comprehension. They still have low listening comprehension with average score 62.5. The most difficult indicator of listening comprehension is making inference. There are only 28% students can answer the questions related making inference. The students' problem in listening comprehension are low self- rating to listening comprehension. They put their selves in average level. It means they have low confidence in listening comprehension. Then, they also have low perceptions related to other language skills. Although, they have some strategies to increase their listening comprehension by listening to the lecturer and friends, and using internet and media social as media for communication. In this case, they have less effort to get good listening comprehension.

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