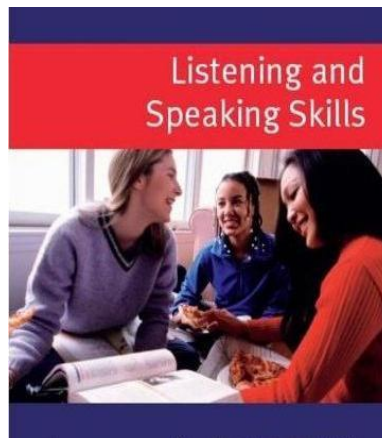


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Reviews: (1) Background; the teaching and learning of English listening skill in Indonesia, (2) Theoretical basis of listening, (3) Free download; English listening materials (audio and script).

(1) Background; the teaching and learning of English listening skill in Indonesia

Of all the English skills taught at school, listening is the most difficult skill faced by the Indonesian students in mastering English. Listening has been relegated to a secondary position in the English language teaching classroom. Compared with speaking, reading and writing skills, there has been a lack of research interest into listening. It has not received wider attention although listening is actually the language skill most often used in everyday life. More than forty percent (40%) of our daily communication time is spent on listening, thirty-five percent (35%) on speaking, sixteen percent (16%) on reading, and only nine percent (9%) on writing (*Burely-Allen 1995*).

In recent years, regarding with the implementation of competence-based curriculum (*KBK*) and school-based curriculum (*KTSP*), there is a change on the approach of the English teaching learning method. The teaching of English is emphasized on the function of language as a mean of communication. The learners focus on *how* to use the language and not on *what* the language is. The curriculum does not concern mainly on the linguistic understanding, but it aims

to make students able to use the language appropriately in daily conversation. As the result, the need for the listening competence has recently attracted considerable attention. Consequently, communicative approaches are proposed to be used in teaching learning method.

However, some observation and researches in the field of English teaching in Indonesia have found that the teaching of listening skill is still disappointing and needs to be improved. Although students have mastered the basic elements of English grammar and vocabulary, their listening comprehension is often weak. Through systematic study of basic English teaching stages at university, it has been recognized that while students' integrated skills in reading, writing, and translating have been improving; their listening and speaking capabilities have been left behind. The key factor that has been recognized in the preliminary studies is students' limited listening comprehension.

In fact, the mastery of English depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening is the first language mode that children acquire. It provides the foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it plays a life-long role in the processes of communication. People spent 70 % of their waking time communicating and three-fourths of this time was spent listening and speaking (*Rankin, 1928*).

Furthermore, listening is the fundamental language skill. It is the medium through which people gain a large portion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. In this day of mass communication, much of it oral, it is of vital importance that students are taught to listen effectively and critically. As an input skill, listening plays a crucial role in students' language development. Language acquisition is achieved mainly through receiving understandable input and listening ability is the critical component in achieving understandable language input.

In Indonesia, One of crucial problems on the teaching of listening skill is lack of listening audio and video materials from the native speakers of English. In fact, students should be familiar with 'how' the language pronounced or spoken and finally they are able to adopt and use it naturally in authentic situation. Students are given listening materials as often as possible, so that they have enough input as the references to use in communication. At this point, it is clear that the teaching of English should emphasize on "listening-first" as a main method in improving English.

(2) Theoretical basis of listening

The following summaries describe some theoretical basis of listening:

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously.

Thomlison's (1984) definition of listening includes "active listening," which goes beyond comprehending as understanding the message content, to comprehension as an act of empathetic understanding of the speaker. Furthermore, Gordon (1985) argues that empathy is essential to listening and contends that it is more than a polite attempt to identify a speaker's perspectives. Rather more importantly, empathetic understanding expands to "egocentric pro-social behavior". Thus, the listener altruistically acknowledges concern for the speaker's welfare and interests.

Ronald and Roskelly (1985) define listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand; and these authors present specific exercises to make students active listeners who are aware of the "inner voice" one hears when writing.

(3) Free download; English listening materials (audio and script)

To participate in improving and developing the teaching of listening skill, www.haarr.wordpress.com provides some English listening materials (audio and script) taken from various sites, e.g. www.britishcouncil.org. These materials can be edited and modified depending on the level and situation of the Indonesian students. The listening audios are in mp3 which can be played using common programs, such as windows player or winamp. The scripts are in pdf and word (doc) files. Hopefully this blog will be useful for the teachers and students in learning English.

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