



## **Students' Listening Difficulties in Virtual Classroom: A Case Study in English Department of Hkbp Nommensen University**

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### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa di kelas virtual mendengarkan. Sebanyak 40 siswa terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Penulis menerapkan metode kualitatif dengan kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur sebagai alat utama penelitian untuk mengumpulkan data. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan siswa dalam menyimak kelas virtual dibagi menjadi 3 bagian utama kesulitan isi materi, kesulitan pendengar/siswa, dan kesulitan pengaturan fisik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pengetahuan kosa kata, aksen pembicara, kecepatan bicara, kurangnya konsentrasi, dan kualitas materi rekaman adalah masalah utama yang dihadapi siswa. Hasil penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa ketika siswa mengalami kesulitan belajar menggunakan kelas virtual, mereka tidak menikmatinya dan tidak termotivasi untuk mempelajari materi menyimak. Pembelajaran menyimak dengan hasil virtual perlu lebih ditingkatkan lagi. Dosen perlu menyadari tantangan belajar mahasiswa. Dosen dapat membantu mahasiswa dalam menciptakan strategi pembelajaran yang efisien dan pada akhirnya meningkatkan keterampilan mendengar bahasa Inggris dan memiliki pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang tantangan belajar mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kesulitan, Mendengarkan, Kelas Maya*

### **Abstract**

This study aims to look at the difficulties faced by students in virtual listening classes. A total of 40 students were involved in this study. The author applies qualitative methods with questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the main research tools to collect data. The research findings show that students' difficulties in listening to virtual classes are divided into 3 main parts: content difficulties, listener/student difficulties, and physical adjustment difficulties. The findings show that knowledge of vocabulary, speaker accent, speed of speech, lack of concentration, and quality of recorded material are the main problems faced by students. The results of this study also show that when students have learning difficulties using the virtual classroom, they do not enjoy it and are not motivated to learn listening material. Listening learning with virtual results needs to be further improved. Lecturers need to be aware of student learning challenges. Lecturers can assist students in creating efficient learning strategies and ultimately improve their English listening skills and have a better understanding of their learning challenges.

**Keywords:** *Difficulties; Listening; Virtual Classroom*

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone uses social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, including those who are learning. Many Indonesian students use the Zoom app and Google Meetings to learn from home. In this epidemic, applying the idea of virtual learning to distance learning systems is becoming a technology trend. Conceptually, virtual learning offers the ability to improve education quality, including the capacity to offer chances for communication between students and instructors as well as between students themselves, and learning resources that are not restricted by geography or time. Virtual learning might offer engaging course material to keep participants interested in learning. However, there are drawbacks to virtual learning as well, some of which include the expensive price that must be paid. As a result, the ability of users of the distance learning program must be used to complete the application of virtual learning in remote learning.

English is the most widely used worldwide language and is used to communicate information on science, technology, and culture in the majority of nations. When learning English, students should learn the four abilities of hearing, reading, speaking, and writing. The first skill that students need to learn is listening because poor listening skills make it difficult for people to communicate effectively (Hamouda, 2013). For instance, the listener's poor listening skills prevent them from understanding what the speaker is saying.

Listening is the capacity to comprehend what others are saying and is one of the language skills. According to Rost (2011), listening entails understanding what the speaker has to say. According to Thomlinson, who was mentioned by Hamouda (2013), listening is the capacity to recognize and comprehend what others are saying. Knowledge of a speaker's accent or pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, and their understanding of meaning are all necessary steps in this process. The ability to listen well allows one to do this. According to the aforementioned definitions, listening is the ability of the listener to understand what the speaker means by recognizing the speaker's words or vocabulary, speaker's accent, speaker pronunciation, grammar used by the speaker, speaker's gesture or action, and listeners' ability to deduce meaning from what the speaker has said.

Although a passive skill, listening is frequently seen as an active skill. According to Siegel, listening is frequently seen as both active and complex because listeners must continuously construct the meaning-based information they receive. Even though it's sometimes said that listening is a passive skill or that it's the opposite of speaking, listening is a productive process in which the student actively participates. By drawing on their own experiences and linguistic expertise as well as paying attention to the speaker's objectives, listeners must create and interpret a speaker's meaning. Although hearing is frequently seen as both active and complex since the listener must develop the speaker's meaning via their evaluation, listening can be seen as a passive talent or in contrast to speaking.

So, it follows that listening can be defined as the capacity of a person to comprehend the message from what a person has to say through words, gestures, and actions. The message must be remade by the listener, who must determine the speaker's aims and draw from it whatever is pertinent to his or her objectives. The listener can then respond to the speaker if they have successfully understood what the speaker is trying to say. Additionally, hearing is a personal action that makes use of a mental map of meaning. The listener makes an effort to interpret the speaker's meaning in light of his or her objectives.

Both students and teachers find it challenging to listen when they are teaching. Because English is not their first language, EFL students find listening to be a challenging skill. High levels of focus are required when listening to understand dialogue and monologue. The majority of kids had issues with listening comprehension. It is evident from the listening test results of the children. Poor listening comprehension scores were received by many EFL students. It was influenced by several things.

Since they were infants, everyone has learned how to listen. They tried to understand it while they listened to the sounds around them. It is evident that from a young age, we practice listening comprehension. Nunan (2003) asserts that hearing is an intentional, deliberate process of interpreting what we hear. Nunan also claims that listening is an active process of understanding and generating meaning from both verbal and non-verbal cues Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011, p. 977). According to Steinberg, listening is "the ability of one individual perceiving another via sense, aural organs, assigning a meaning to the communication, and interpreting it," (Bingol, 2014, p.1).

The verbal communication technique that is used in foreign language classrooms the most frequently, according to Yang & Chen (2007), is listening. The majority of the time, students use their listening abilities. However, most people consider listening to be a secondary talent that comes effortlessly when they pick up new languages. As a result, it continues to be the area of language teaching that is least understood and most ignored (Glisan, 1985 in Yang & Chen, 2007). According to Underwood (1989), the following factors contribute to difficulties with listening comprehension: inability to control the rate at which speakers speak; inability to have things repeated; listener's limited vocabulary; inability to recognize "signals"; the problem with interpretation; inability to focus (topic, effort, technical issues); and established learning habit or listening perfectionism. Speech rate, vocabulary, and pronunciation are listed by Higgin (1995) as the issues and elements affecting listening comprehension that Omani students must deal with.

Students may experience some issues with virtual learning due to internal or external factors. Problems with the audio or the signal are examples of external factors, as are time constraints and expensive internet data. Internal issues like difficulty listening when learning English directly, a lack of vocabulary, a lack of comprehension, and a lack of focus during the learning process can also be a problem. To address this issue, the lecturer must present the material slowly and clearly to make it easier for students to understand, and during the virtual

learning process, students must pay attention. Learning is a crucial skill for students to acquire when learning a language, such as English, but becoming a good listener is harder than it might seem. This is inextricably linked to the ways that listening affects students' vocabulary development and language proficiency. Students' pronunciation, word stress, and syntax acquisition may all improve through listening. It also helps with knowledge and proficiency in the language. According to Gilakjani's (2016) research, the length of listening time and the caliber of the recorded materials were the main barriers to listening comprehension. These earlier studies, however, only pay attention to events that happen outside of the listener. Other researchers look into the listener's internal aspects as well. According to Renukadevi (2014), the main challenge in listening is maintaining the listener's attention. The inability to focus is seen as a serious issue because even a brief lapse in concentration can seriously harm cognition. Furthermore, Hamouda (2013) discovers that the student's enthusiasm and focus are related to their difficulties with listening comprehension. These issues demonstrate that some students have trouble following what an English speaker is saying. This study looks into how challenging it is for pupils to listen in a virtual classroom and how to cope with those challenges.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. This research method in- used to obtain data systematic, factual, and accurate. Thus, researchers try to data analysis with the whole wealth of information as recorded on data that has been collected. In this research, the writers tried to see a phenomenon that occurs, after the data is summarized and analyzed researchers try to design remedial and proper evaluation. the stages of the research below. 1) The researcher determines the research subject before making observations and interviews, 2) The determination subject is selected through students who have a case or learning difficulties. 3) Collection approaches and techniques the data used is the method listen, observe, recording, and testing. 4) The technique used in Processing data is a way to see what progress is coming from these students in some meetings. 5) Data is sorted and arranged in a development table. The data in this study are in the form of oral and written data. Oral data was obtained by using the technique of data collection in the form of interviews and observations of students. While the data in the form of writing is obtained by using the instrument in the form of a test. The data that appears will be a misperception, information gap, and difficulty in learning listening skills in class.

There were 40 students as respondents to the questionnaire. In doing the research, the writers used a questionnaire. The questionnaires included the factors related to listening comprehension (2018) A. Difficulties Related to Students' Listening Comprehension Process (12 items); B. Listening Difficulties Related to Linguistic Features ( 16 items); C. Difficulties Caused by Failure to Concentrate ( 6 items); D. Learner's Perceptions of Listening Difficulties Related to Psychological Characteristics (5 items); E. Listening Difficulties Related to the Listener (7 items); F. Listening Difficulties Related to the Speaker ( 7 items); G. Listening Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting (3 items); H. Listening

Difficulties Related to the Content of the Text (9 items). Apart from the questionnaire, the writers also took 10 students to have interviews to strengthen the data about the listening difficulties faced by the students.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Students' Difficulties in Listening to Virtual Class

From the result of the questionnaire and interview, it was found that there are several issues related to the student's difficulties in the listening virtual class, they are:

- a. Difficulty understanding the voice of a native English speaker.  
There are five main causes of difficulty in capturing native speakers' voices in English, namely fast delivery (35.4%), no opportunity repetition of speech (15%), unclear speaker pronunciation (12.2%), low volume (12%), and unfamiliar and difficult vocabulary (12%). The five causes above can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Difficulty in understanding the voice of a native English speaker

| No | Causes of Difficulties            | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1  | Disturbing noise                  | 10%        |
| 2  | Overlapping sound                 | 3,3%       |
| 3  | Unfamiliar accent                 | 12,2%      |
| 4  | Low volume                        | 12%        |
| 5  | Unclear pronunciation of speakers | 3%         |
| 6  | Difficult vocabularies            | 12%        |
| 7  | Difficult structure               | 4.1%       |
| 8  | Fast speech delivery              | 35,4%      |
| 9  | No repetition                     | 15%        |

- b. Difficulties understanding unknown/unfamiliar vocabulary  
There are eight causes the difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. Thus, there are five main reasons out of the eight reasons that be main reasons, namely fast delivery (36.36%), unclear speaker pronunciation (22.13%), lack of opportunity for repeating speech (16%), unfamiliar and difficult vocabulary (11,08%), and foreign accent (8.03%). The eight reasons are listed below:

Table 2. Difficulties understanding unknown/unfamiliar vocabulary

| No | Causes of Difficulties            | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1  | Disturbing noise                  | 1%         |
| 2  | Ellipsis                          | 0.4 %      |
| 3  | Unfamiliar accent                 | 8.03%      |
| 4  | Unclear pronunciation of speakers | 22.13 %    |
| 5  | Unfamiliar/difficult vocabulary   | 11.08%     |
| 6  | Difficult structure               | 5%         |
| 7  | Fast speech delivery              | 36.36 %    |
| 8  | No repetition                     | 16 %       |

- c. Difficulty understanding the speed of a native speaker (speaker accent).  
There are nine elements listed in Table 3 that can contribute to pupils having trouble understanding native speakers' rapid speech. Lack of opportunity to repeat speech (26.57%), rapid speech delivery (19.08%), speakers' unclear pronunciation (15.90%), low volume (13.67%), and foreign accents (5%) are the five main causes. Here is the list of nine elements:

Table 3. Difficulty understanding the speed of a native speaker (speaker accent)

| No | Causes of Difficulties            | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1  | Disturbing noise                  | 10%        |
| 2  | Overlapping sound                 | 4.87%      |
| 3  | Unfamiliar accent                 | 5%         |
| 4  | Low volume                        | 13.67%     |
| 5  | Unclear pronunciation of speakers | 15.90%     |
| 6  | Difficult vocabularies            | 2.50%      |
| 7  | Difficult structure               | 2.41%      |
| 8  | Fast speech delivery              | 19.08%     |
| 9  | No repetition                     | 26.57%     |

- d. Difficulty understanding the text that is listened to in a relatively short time. According to the table below, from the ten causes, there are five main causes of difficulty understanding the text that is listened to in a relatively short time response time or rests relatively short response time ich ranks first (35.40%), ignorance of the topic discussed ranks second (15%), the third is unclear speech (12.2%), and the length of the text and fast delivery (12%).

Table 4. Difficulty understanding the text that is listened to in a relatively short time

| No | Causes of Difficulties                     | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|
| 1  | Text with abstract reasoning               | 10%        |
| 2  | Noise                                      | 3,3%       |
| 3  | Unclear speech                             | 12,2%      |
| 4  | Length of the text                         | 12%        |
| 5  | Short timing to respond and give an answer | 35.40%     |
| 6  | Unfamiliar words                           | 5%         |
| 7  | Difficult structure                        | 4.1%       |
| 8  | Ignorance of the topic being discussed     | 15%        |
| 9  | Rapid speech                               | 2%         |
| 10 | No repetition                              | 1%         |

- e. Difficulty concentrating for a long time (lack of concentration). The difficulty concentrating for a long time when taking the test was mainly caused by the length of the text and decreased physical condition (36.40%) chosen by the respondents as the two causes of their difficulty, and the next two causes of difficulty are rapid speech (20.25%) and weak memory (15.35%). It is shown in the table below

Table 5. Difficulty concentrating for a long time (lack of concentration)

| No | Causes of Difficulties      | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------|------------|
| 1  | Disturbing noise            | 10%        |
| 2  | Longer text                 | 50%        |
| 3  | Rapid speech                | 35%        |
| 4  | Physical condition          | 5%         |
| 5  | Lower concentration ability | 10%        |
| 6  | Weak memory                 | 15.35%     |
| 7  | Temperature                 | 3%         |

- f. Difficulty interpreting discourse/text  
Some main causes out of eleven difficulties in interpreting discourse/text are short response time or answer time and no repetition of speech (26%), the type of text that contains abstract reasoning (15.45), the length of the text and fast delivery (14%) as it is shown below

Table 6. Difficulty interpreting discourse/text

| No | Causes of Difficulties                     | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|
| 1  | Complicated instruction                    | 10%        |
| 2  | Text with abstract reasoning               | 15.45%     |
| 3  | Noise                                      | 12,2%      |
| 4  | Clarity of pronunciation                   | 3%         |
| 5  | Length of text                             | 14%        |
| 6  | Short timing to respond and give an answer | 26%        |
| 7  | Unfamiliar/difficult vocabulary            | 5.48%      |
| 8  | Difficult structure                        | 10.43%     |
| 9  | Ignorance of the topic being discussed     | 9.86%      |
| 10 | Rapid delivery                             | 2%         |
| 11 | No repetition                              | 1.58%      |

- g. Difficulty in accommodating a relatively large amount of information in a short time.

There are ten causes of these difficulties with some main causes of difficulties in accommodating information of this nature, namely the absence of opportunities to repeat speech (22.36%), short response time or response time and fast delivery (20.82%), length of text (16.73%), as well as unclear pronunciation of speakers (13.18%). The whole nine causes are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Difficulty in accommodating a relatively large amount of information in a short time

| No | Causes of Difficulties                     | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|
| 1  | Noise                                      | 7%         |
| 2  | Clarity of pronunciation                   | 13.18%     |
| 3  | Length of text                             | 16.73%     |
| 4  | Short timing to respond and give an answer | 20.82%     |
| 5  | Unfamiliar/difficult vocabulary            | 5%         |
| 6  | Difficult structure                        | 9.83%      |
| 7  | Ignorance of the topic being discussed     | 2.13%      |
| 8  | Rapid delivery                             | 35,4%      |
| 9  | No repetition                              | 22.36%     |
| 10 | Weak memory                                | 2.95%      |

In conclusion, there are five main listening challenges faced by the students namely: speed, a difficult-to-segment group of sounds, an emphasis on the translation of the word, associating sounds with words and meanings, and idiomatic idioms. Gohh (2010) highlighted four elements that influence listening: the listener, the speaker, the stimuli, and the setting. She claimed that the most crucial listening component for the students listening issues is "students' competency." It implies that students' problems could be caused by a lack of linguistic proficiency. However, Goh (2010) noted that "quickly forgetting what is heard (parsing)" is the most frequent issue. Similarly, "forgetting the meaning of the word (perception)" was cited by students as their biggest listening challenge. Theoretical explanations of listening comprehension can help us understand the difficulties that students encounter when listening to spoken texts. These revelations, however, fall short of providing a complete explanation of these issues. We must take into account the speech itself in the setting of the classroom to identify the origins of listening comprehension.

## **2. Strategies Use to Help Students Solve Listening Comprehension Issues**

Not all of the issues mentioned above can be solved. For example, certain characteristics of the speaker and the message are inescapable. However, this does not imply that the lecturers are powerless to address problems. At the very least, they can give the students the listening resources they need, the background and linguistic knowledge, the enabling abilities, the comfortable classroom environment, and the helpful activities they need to learn effective listening techniques. The following suggestions are useful (Hamouda, 2013):

- 1) Making Listening Materials More Effective.  
Lecturers should adopt and adapt listening materials that match their students' interests and backgrounds since it is obvious that students have different learning styles and abilities. This is because listening materials only become stimulating and motivating when they are slightly challenging to what they have already learned and suited their interests.
- 2) Activating the Vocabulary of the Students.  
According to research, one of the main reasons' students struggle with listening comprehension is a lack of their vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the important aspects of listening comprehension skills. The more students have their number of vocabularies, the easiest they can listen to the material. The majority of students say they lack the vocabulary needed for listening comprehension, while a tiny percentage of them claim their vocabulary is too limited to grasp. Since a student's lack of vocabulary becomes a significant barrier to their ability to understand what they are hearing, it is important for lecturers to provide students with the critical words they require for listening comprehension. This is something that both Underwood (1989) and Higgin have recognized (1995). When students can connect what they already know to what they are supposed to listen for, they are more likely to listen better or more effectively. Therefore, it is preferable to activate students' vocabulary by having them guess the meaning of words used in the listening context before explaining the meaning to them.
- 3) Applying Visual Media  
For students to actively guess and imagine, lecturers use visual aids or construct images and diagrams connected to the listening themes. Visual aids focus students' attention, stimulate their enthusiasm for the subject, and enable them to relate to the spoken text's content, helping listeners overcome challenges like unfamiliar vocabulary and few word pairs.
- 4) Using a Variety of Input  
In order to overcome the challenges above, additionally, the lecturers should expose the students to a variety of inputs, including speeches, radio news, movies, TV plays, announcements, normal conversation, interviews, narrative, English music, etc.
- 5) Using Connected Speech  
Weak forms, contractions, elision, and assimilation, which characterize connected speech (Anne Anderson & Tony Lynch, 1988), are seen to be the main barrier to spoken English acquisition for beginning EFL learners.



Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to educate their pupils about these particular characteristics of spoken language whenever it is convenient so that they won't feel anxious or shocked when they listen to real listening materials.

6) Working Up with Pronunciation

According to the study's findings, many students have difficulty understanding what is being heard because of poor pronunciation. As a result, lecturers must assist students in becoming exposed to and comfortable with native speakers' accurate pronunciation. That increases the student's ability to pronounce words correctly, which makes listening to native speakers more effective and efficient for them. Many lecturers believe that students' proper pronunciation greatly aids in their ability to learn to listen. They also think that teaching students to pronounce words correctly is one of the main outcomes of listening acquisition.

7) Accent Awareness

Make students aware of the many accents used by native speakers. Strong regional accents are obviously inappropriate for listening instruction, yet native speakers do have some accents in natural discourse. Additionally, the American accent differs significantly from the British and Australian ones. As a result, it's essential to allow children to deal with various accents, especially while listening extensively.

8) Promoting Prediction

Prediction is a method that possibly be used before and during listening. Students are asked to make predictions regarding the text's subject matter or the speaker's next move. The lecturers may share information about the subject of the listening text or the speaker in order to enable students to anticipate and envisage what they will hear (s). Additionally, you might ask your students to forecast the grammar structures that will probably be used in the hearing text or to construct a list of terms and phrases that are relevant to the subject and might be used in the text. Before listening to spoken literature, they can acquaint students with important language and concepts in this way. Students are better prepared to listen when they are self-assured and have specific words in mind.

9) Inspiring students' interest and encouraging them to pay attention to the spoken message

If students can connect the listening experience to their own life, they will be more receptive to actively listen to what the speaker has to say. Additionally, lecturers can foster a listening-friendly environment and promote excellent listening skills, which are essential lifelong abilities.

10) Building Prior Topical and Linguistic Knowledge in Students.

Encourage the students to explore and explain what they already know about the material in the listening text to activate their schemata. The lecturer can assist students to concentrate their attention on what to listen for by giving them the background information they need to understand the text. As a result, students start to anticipate what they will hear and

connect it to what they already know, which makes the content more relevant.

11) Using a Slow Speech Rate

In L2 instruction, it has long been thought that slower speech would make listening comprehension easier. It is essential to encourage lecturers to lower their speech rate to one that is comfortable for their students.

12) Giving feedback and making an effort to get as much of it as you can

In order to make listening meaningful, the instructor should close the gaps between input and students' responses as well as between feedback and students' responses. This encourages the rectification of errors while also promoting them. It can help students gain more assurance in their capacity to handle listening issues. The lecturers can determine where the class is headed and how to instruct it with the help of the students' input.

13) Enhancing the Listening Skills Learning Environment.

A crucial factor determining the quality of listening skill development and training is the listening environment, which includes listening laboratories in addition to cassette tapes, tape recorders, and written listening materials.

The results of this survey, however, indicate that pupils are not happy with the current learning environment. The lack of a well-equipped listening laboratory, according to the pupils, makes it difficult for them to focus when listening. Therefore, it is crucial to modernize the current lab in order to give all students an equal chance to learn listening skills in a setting that would inspire them to get better at it.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study determined the difficulties faced by students when understanding Listening Comprehension in a virtual class, and identified strategies used by students in overcoming these difficulties. Based on the results of the questionnaire, there are two parts that students find difficult to take the Listening Comprehension test, namely conversations session (50%) and Talks (31.8%), It was caused learners were difficult accommodated by a lot of information in a relatively short time (64.09%), interpret the discourse (61.98%), understand the text that is listened to relatively short time (61.82%), understand the fast voice of native speakers (58.59%), concentrate for a long time (55.84%), understand every word (55.68%) and captured the voice of native English speakers (55.05%). these difficulties because there is no opportunity to repeat the speech and delivery faster than native speakers, the response time or short response time, and the text is too long.

In addition to language development, listening is crucial for everyday conversation. The students' listening skills, however, appear to be lacking. There are many issues, including the listening content itself, the learner's unsuitable learning practices, and the time they spend studying themselves is insufficient to acquire the skill. The kids should be exposed to a wider diversity of listening and learn the tricks or tactics through independent study. There isn't a perfect approach that works for all kinds of English classrooms. Here, the teachers are

crucial in determining which listening techniques are appropriate and how to use them in the listening assignment. As the learners get more proficient in the English language, listening activities should be designed from simple to more complicated.

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