

AN INVESTIGATION OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY MAHASANTRIS IN AN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN BANDUNG

Salsa Nabila

English Education Department, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
ms.acaonduty@gmail.com

Dahlya Indra Nurwanti

English Education Department, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
dahlyanurwanti@uinsgd.ac.id

Dini Utami Mulyaningsih

English Education Department, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
diniutami@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

Listening is a critical skill in language learning, involving the ability to process, interpret, and understand spoken language. It forms the foundation of effective communication. This research aims to investigate the listening comprehension abilities of *mahasantris* at an Islamic boarding school in Bandung, aiming to uncover their perceptions and the problems they encounter in listening to English. The research employed a qualitative methodology and case study research approach, utilizing data analysis, questionnaires, and interviews to gather data. Participants included 21 *mahasantris* in their 7th semester at the institution, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives. This method ensured a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting their listening comprehension. The findings from this research reveal that *mahasantris* generally perceive their English listening comprehension abilities as one of the most challenging skills to master. Due to *mahasantris* facing significant issues, including limited vocabulary, difficulties with accents and pronunciation, and restricted exposure to authentic English materials. Psychological aspects such as low self-confidence and anxiety, moreover, with external constraints such as lack of resources and teaching materials, further prevent their progress. In conclusion, the research highlights the importance of addressing both individual and contextual factors that prevent listening comprehension among *mahasantris*. Recommendations include relevant and engaging teaching materials, the existence of active listening practices, and providing supportive learning environments. These steps are crucial for equipping *mahasantris* with the skills needed to navigate their professional future.

Keywords: Listening comprehension, *Mahasantris*, Islamic Boarding School, English language learning, listening comprehension problems

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the English listening comprehension abilities of *mahasantris* in Islamic Boarding School and explores their perspectives on this specific ability. The aim is to obtain *mahasantris*' perspectives on the ease or difficulty they face when listening to English and to identify particular problems they face in this context. Analyzing the English listening comprehension and perspectives of *mahasantris* in Islamic Boarding School contributes to developing more efficient English learning methods that adapt to their specific requirement.

In this context, *mahasantris* refers to a community of students who live in pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) while studying for a college degree. These students have special traits that differentiate them apart from their non-pesantren counterparts (Alfinnas, 2018). *Mahasantris* not only study general subjects but also engage in intensive religious studies, which affects their schedule and study load. Integrating religious and general education creates a different learning environment, where they must balance both aspects of education (Ikhwan, 2014). They often have active schedules and limited resources, requiring a customized learning strategy to improve their listening comprehension and other English language abilities.

Moreover, learning English in Islamic Boarding School has its challenges that differ from those in regular schools. The curriculum focuses more on religious education in Islamic Boarding School, and English is often taught as a secondary subject with limited time and resources (Suardi et al., 2017). However, mastery of English is essential for students to access information and wider educational opportunities (Alfinnas, 2018). Islamic Boarding Schools may employ less varied materials and less intensive English teaching methods than public educational facilities. Limited resources, like language laboratories and modern instructional materials, could make learning English challenging. As a result, this research is essential to identifying specific challenges to English listening learning in Islamic Boarding School environments and providing recommendations to educators on how to enhance their students' listening abilities effectively.

In the context of language learning, listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Listening is the first skill that must be mastered by the students because, without good listening skills, the communication process cannot run well (Hamouda, 2013). Listening is receiving what the speaker says, making and showing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker and answering, and creating meaning with participation, creativity, and empathy (Gilakjani & Souburi, 2016). To learn listening skills a conscious effort to enhance listening abilities through consistent practice and comprehension. Listening comprehension refers to the ability to understand spoken messages in a language that has been acquired (Rahman et al., 2019). It involves identifying words, phrases, and sentence patterns employed in conversations or listening materials and comprehending the message's significance and meaning. Listening comprehension is crucial in acquiring the English language as it involves the listener's active participation in generating meaning (Rost, 2002; Hamouda, 2013). Listening comprehension problems in English language learning can be diverse and complex. Learners commonly face problems, including adapting to the speed of native speakers' speech, struggling with new accents, and identifying vocabulary in different contexts. *Mahasantris* encounters many issues when trying to comprehend different languages, especially English. The problems involve difficulties in comprehending pronunciation, a restricted vocabulary, and problems with concentration (Warohma et al., 2020). In addition, listening comprehension problems can also develop from the use of unfamiliar phrases or idioms, complex sentence structures, or the use of uncommon words. Knowing about one's listening comprehension problems is a component of personal knowledge. Language learners are generally aware of these problems, which they perceive as an unpleasant yet necessary aspect of acquiring a new language (Goh, 2000). The major listening comprehension problems are a lack of background knowledge and the ability to recognize stress in pronouncing words. Listening comprehension problems are divided into seven categories. These are problems related to the listening material, the linguistic feature, the concentration failure, the psychological aspects, the listener, the speaker, and the physical condition (Hamouda, 2013).

Likewise, the results of preliminary observations at Islamic Boarding School reveal certain primary patterns of the listening comprehension problems learners face in these institutions. This observation showed that many learners were challenged in their listening comprehension practices. The correct accuracy score from listening comprehension practice, using questions from British Council hearing B2, was below 50% by 20 *mahasantris* (See Appendix 4). They stated that although they were familiar with some words, they could not remember their meaning immediately. They also expressed difficulty in understanding the intended message, though they were familiar with the literal meaning of words. The British Council Level B2 is utilized in preliminary studies due to its alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an internationally accepted standard for evaluating English language proficiency. Furthermore, adopting the British

Council's B2 level or qualifications framework could present an accurate framework for researchers to investigate problems related to effectively comprehending the English listened to by participants in the study.

Based on the collected results, it is certain that conducting this research is of critical importance. Mahasantris in pesantren encounter several obstacles to improving their English listening abilities, which are affected by internal factors such as motivation and confidence, as well as external issues such as lack of support and ineffective teaching techniques (Risdianto, 2016). Risdianto's theory is very relevant to the facts faced by mahasantris in this field. That, based on the results of preliminary observations, shows that many mahasantris face obstacles in practicing listening comprehension as explained in the paragraph above. Mahasantris faced they were familiar with some words, but they could not remember their meaning immediately. They also expressed difficulty in understanding the intended message, though they were familiar with the literal meaning of words. Therefore, the current research is very essential for thoroughly identifying and comprehending these obstacles and challenges effectively and specifically to the context. By obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the problems faced by mahasantris, educational institutions can develop more suitable educational programs and offer relevant assistance. Moreover, this research has the potential to contribute substantially to the academic literature on English language acquisition in Islamic Boarding School settings, an area that has not been thoroughly investigated.

Furthermore, many previous studies have contributed significantly to the information base in understanding the problem of English listening comprehension among mahasantris. Research conducted by Adhimah (2020), focused on students' difficulties in listening comprehension at the Edi Mancoro Pesantren Language Village. The next research comes from Hermida (2021). This research focused on analyzing EFL students' difficulties in understanding listening in English and identifying the main problems that inhibit listening comprehension. This research also aims to suggest potential solutions to improve listening skills among EFL learners. Other research comes from Sari & Fithriyana (2019). This research focused on the problems EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students face in listening comprehension. However, there are still gaps in the literature that require further research. Previous research tends to focus on the problems that learners face in listening comprehension. The current study may expand insights into listening comprehension problems among college students by focusing on a different context. By investigating mahasantris' perceptions of their listening skills and identifying their specific problems, the current study might fill this knowledge gap and provide a deeper understanding of how contextual factors affect English language learning in Islamic Boarding School.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative research methods, a thorough and in-depth approach, through implementing a case study research design to explore in depth a particular program, event, activity, process, or individual (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative method may investigate, comprehend, and explain phenomena in natural environments (Creswell, 2012). The current study employs qualitative approaches to collect accurate data related to observable phenomena. Qualitative research methodology is appropriate in this study because it incorporates data interpretations collected from questionnaires and interviews.

Furthermore, this research employed a case study design as its research approach. Case studies are typically conducted in natural settings to give researchers rich insights into participants' activities, perspectives, and experiences, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the research context (Robinson & Savenye, 2005). It explores a problem and finds detailed information about a case, collecting data from a few participants to obtain more information and analyzing the data by interpreting a deeper meaning of the result (Creswell,

2012). A case study in terms of the types could contain a quantitative element related to research problems and findings. This study classifies various listening comprehension problems to determine the most problematic matters for them while having a listening practice to learn the problems they encountered. On the other hand, this study finds deeper information on the causes of each problem in their English listening comprehension skills.

Based on the explanation above, this study employs qualitative research, specifically a case study design, which aligns with the previous description. This study method was selected because it can provide an in-depth exploration of the problems and factors that contribute to mahasantris' development of listening comprehension skills within the context of English language learning.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

Listening Practice Results

The mahasantris face significant problems in English listening comprehension, particularly when exposed to faster speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, and complex or technical topics. Items with higher speech rates consistently resulted in higher incorrect answer rates, indicating that students struggle to process information quickly, especially when the content involves less familiar, formal, or academic language. Even at lower CEFR levels, comprehension difficulties were evident, suggesting a mismatch between their listening skills and other language proficiencies. Short audio durations further complicated comprehension, leaving little time for mahasantris to process the information, while topics in everyday scenarios were more manageable.

Questionnaire Results

After taking a listening practice to find out the problems of listening comprehension in English learning, mahasantris are asked to fill out a questionnaire to express their feelings while taking the practice. Therefore, the reasons for their difficulties in English listening comprehension can be found after understanding what they feel when practicing.

The questionnaire is divided into 5 sections, how students compare their ability in listening with the three other skills and how students rate their listening proficiency, students' general self-rating to listening proficiency, students' perception of the importance of listening skills, listening problems related to the content or material of the listening, listening problems related to linguistic features, and listening problems related to psychological characteristics. Sections 1, 2, 3,4, and 5 consist of 4 items. Those items are associated with the process of listening practice that aims to find the general problems of mahasantris' listening comprehension.

How Students Compare Their Ability in Listening with The Three Other Skills and How Students Rate Their Listening Proficiency

In language learning, mastering the four essential skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—is crucial for effective communication. Among these, listening is often considered the first and most fundamental skill learners must acquire. According to Hamouda (2013), listening plays a vital role in communication and is the first skill students must master in language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasize that self-assessment is closely tied to motivation and confidence. Understanding how students view their listening skills can guide educators in providing the proper support.

Starting with comparing mahasantris' abilities across different language skills, reading is one of the more vital skills for many mahasantris than listening. Based on the data analysis, reading was generally the most vital skill for many mahasantris, with 67% or about 14 out of

21 mahasantris rating their ability as good, possibly due to control over speed and use of visuals. Writing showed a more balanced level of confidence, with 43%, or about 9 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as good, although 29%, or about 6 out of 21 mahasantris, still found it challenging. Speaking presented more difficulties, with no respondents or 0 out of 21 mahasantris. Based on the data analysis, reading was generally the most vital skill for many students, with 67% or about 14 out of 21 mahasantris rating their ability as good, possibly due to control over speed and use of visuals. Writing showed a more balanced level of confidence, with 43% or about 9 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as good, although 29% or about 6 out of 21 mahasantris, still found it challenging. Speaking presented more difficulties, with no respondents or 0 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as excellent and 57% or about 12 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as average, emphasizing the need for more spontaneous language practice. Listening was the most challenging skill, with 62% or about 13 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as average, indicating significant difficulties with real-time auditory processing and more complex tasks such as understanding fast speech and accents. Based on the data analysis, reading was generally the most vital skill for many mahasantris, with 67% or about 14 out of 21 mahasantris rating their ability as good, possibly due to control over speed and use of visuals. Writing showed a more balanced level of confidence, with 43%, or about 9 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as good, although 29%, or about 6 out of 21 mahasantris, still found it challenging. Speaking presented more difficulties, with no respondents or 0 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as excellent and 57% or about 12 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as average, emphasizing the need for more spontaneous language practice. Listening was the most challenging skill, with 62% or about 13 out of 21 mahasantris rating their skills as average, indicating significant difficulties with real-time auditory processing and more complex tasks such as understanding fast speech and accents.

Students' general self-rating to listening proficiency

In this section, mahasantris are prompted to evaluate their overall listening proficiency. Hamouda (2013) points out that many feel weak in listening due to a lack of training, as reading and writing are often prioritized. This section looks at how mahasantris rate their listening skills compared to their peers, revealing common problems they face.

The fact that most mahasantris rate their abilities as average or poor highlights a broader frustration with listening comprehension. This could be related to a lack of practice in real-time listening and insufficient training in processing spoken language. The self-assessment points to a gap in language education, where listening is often overlooked despite its importance in communication. The high percentage of students rating their skills as average suggests that while they may handle basic tasks, they struggle with more complex listening challenges.

Students' Perception of the Importance of Listening Skill

Listening is one of the critical skills needed to learn a second language and is essential for daily communication and academic success. Hamouda (2013) explains that listening is essential for understanding and responding in real time. However, listening is often more complex than other skills like reading or writing because it requires learners to quickly understand spoken language, handle different accents or speech speeds, and figure out unfamiliar words without visual support. Students generally perceive listening as an essential skill, with many

recognizing its crucial role in effective communication and academic success (Hamouda, 2013). This section looks at how mahasantris view the importance of listening, their experiences with it, and how their challenges relate to these problems.

The findings reveal that the majority of mahasantris still face significant challenges in listening comprehension. While only a small portion (5%) reported never experiencing difficulty, a large percentage (62%) sometimes struggle, and nearly one-third (29%) often find it difficult to understand spoken texts. In terms of engagement, many mahasantris perceive listening tasks as uninteresting, with over half (52%) sometimes feeling bored and 24% often finding them dull. Nevertheless, a notable number also expressed positive engagement, with 43% sometimes and another 43% often feeling excited during listening activities. Regarding their previous training, the responses varied—while 48% often received sufficient training and 10% always did, a combined 43% reported either never or only occasionally receiving enough practice. These results suggest that listening comprehension remains a challenge for many mahasantris, likely influenced by inconsistent prior training and varying levels of motivation and interest in listening tasks.

Listening Problems Related to the Content or Material of the Listening

Listening comprehension is affected by the content of the material. Familiar topics help listeners predict and understand better. However, students often struggle to follow and grasp the message when the material has unfamiliar words, complex grammar, or is too long (Hamouda, 2013). This gets harder when the content is dense or too fast. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) highlight that language knowledge and context are key to understanding, and unfamiliar words or ideas can disrupt this. The less familiar the material, the harder it is for students to understand and remember, causing common listening problems.

The results indicate that mahasantris commonly face significant challenges in listening comprehension, particularly when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and lengthy spoken texts. None of the respondents reported being entirely free from difficulties, highlighting the universal nature of these issues. A large portion frequently struggles with unfamiliar words (48%) and complex grammar (33%), which often disrupt their understanding of spoken content. Additionally, the length of spoken texts poses challenges, with 33% often and 19% always finding long listening passages difficult to comprehend. Despite these obstacles, all mahasantris acknowledge the importance of relying on their prior knowledge to aid comprehension, with the majority (57%) often using their background knowledge to make sense of spoken texts. This suggests that while many mahasantris struggle with linguistic and structural elements of listening, strategic use of prior knowledge plays a crucial role in overcoming these challenges.

Listening Problems Related to Linguistic Features

This section shows that listening comprehension requires mahasantris to process spoken language in real-time, which linguistic factors makes more complex. Hamouda (2013) notes that colloquial language, slang, reduced forms, and prosodic features like intonation and stress complicate listening. Unfamiliar accents and pronunciation further challenge students, affecting their ability to decode words and understand meaning. Exposure to different speech forms is essential. The following section explores how these factors impact mahasantris' listening comprehension.

The data results identified several factors that significantly complicated mahasantris' listening comprehension. Linguistic elements such as unfamiliar words posed significant difficulties, with most participants often or sometimes having difficulty inferring their meaning. This problem often led to interruptions in their focus and comprehension. Furthermore, pauses, errors, and corrections in speech further compounded these challenges,

as many students found it difficult to maintain comprehension when faced with such problems. Furthermore, variable speech rate emerged as a general challenge, with all participants reporting difficulty processing speech delivered at inconsistent speeds. These results thus underscore the difficulties of listening comprehension and the important role of linguistic and external factors in shaping mahasantris' ability to understand spoken language effectively.

Listening Problems Related to Psychological Characteristics

This section explores how psychological barriers like these affect mahasantris' listening abilities, building on theories that suggest emotional regulation plays a key role in effective listening. Hamouda (2013) highlights that emotional states such as anxiety, nervousness, or discomfort can severely hinder concentration during listening tasks. When people are anxious, their cognitive load increases, making focusing on the speaker's message harder.

The results show that several factors, such as low recording quality, difficulty processing new words, and disinterest in the spoken content, substantially impact mahasantris' listening comprehension. Nearly 50% or about 10 out of 21 mahasantris state that poor audio quality constantly interferes with their ability to concentrate and comprehend. Similarly, most mahasantris find it difficult to focus when confronted with unknown phrases, and new vocabulary distracts them. Furthermore, many mahasantris frequently struggle due to a lack of interest in the subject matter, further impairing their capacity to understand spoken content.

Interview Results

The primary objective of this survey is to ascertain mahasantris' perceptions of their English listening comprehension abilities. Pupils' proficiency in English listening comprehension. This research question employs interviews as a data collection technique. Mahasantris from the Islamic Boarding School remain the primary resource, as they can assess their English listening proficiency, enabling researchers to identify the problems they encounter and the contributing factors.

Question number 1: Does the speaker's accent impact your audio or English conversation comprehension?

Three respondents agreed that the ability to understand English is greatly influenced by accent. The first mahasantris said that accent differences cause pronunciation, which can be confusing when listening. The second mahasantris added that certain accents, such as the American accent, are easier to understand than others, such as the British accent, especially when listening. The third mahasantris strengthen this opinion by saying that accent influences how vocabulary is heard and understood. Overall, they said that accent differences significantly affect understanding of spoken English.

Question number 2: Are you able to comprehend audio or English conversations that contain an excessive amount of foreign vocabulary?

Based on three respondents, the ability to listen to English depends on vocabulary comprehension, primarily rarely used or unfamiliar vocabulary. The first mahasantri said that comprehension varies: some are easy to understand, and some are difficult. The second mahasantri said foreign vocabulary is difficult to understand if only heard without knowing how to read and write it. The third mahasantri added that vocabulary often heard is easier to understand, while vocabulary rarely heard is difficult to understand in conversation. In short, comprehension when listening to English is greatly influenced by the frequency of exposure and familiarity with the vocabulary.

Question number 3: How does speech rate affect your comprehension? Do you understand more quickly if the speaker speaks more slowly?

When they listened to the English recording, all three respondents said that the speed of speech affected their understanding. Overall, the first and second mahasantri agreed that understanding speech is more accessible with a slower speaking speed because fast speech makes words unclear and can lead to misunderstandings. The third mahasantri added that, besides speaking speed, a person's understanding also depends on their familiarity with the vocabulary used in the conversation.

Question number 4: How do you think the learning environment affects your ability to understand listening material?

All three respondents agreed that the environment significantly influences learning English, especially in terms of improving vocabulary and pronunciation. The first mahasantri emphasized that the environment is very important for increasing vocabulary, especially if there are language lessons around them. The second mahasantri emphasized that listening to the teacher's words in the learning environment can influence how they read and pronounce words. The third mahasantri stated that an environment where people often use English in daily conversations makes language learning easier. In contrast, an environment where people rarely use the language makes it more difficult. Overall, they emphasized the importance of having an active English-speaking environment to help people learn and use the language well.

Question number 5: Do you feel that listening skills influence the development of other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing? Why?

All three respondents emphasized that listening skills greatly influence English language proficiency, particularly pronunciation and speaking skills. The first mahasantri mentioned that activities like listening to music can affect their language comprehension. The second mahasantri stated that listening helps them repeat and improve their pronunciation, aiding their speaking skills. The third mahasantri noted that listening is a very important initial step because the learning process will be more straightforward if listening skills are well-developed. If listening skills are well-developed later on, listening ability will be improved. Therefore, listening is considered essential for learning English.

Question number 6: Do you feel worry or anxiety when you are unable to comprehend the speaker's message or intended meaning?

All three respondents expressed their concerns when they cannot understand what the speaker was saying. The first mahasantri is worried, especially if the speaker talks quickly because it makes the message difficult to understand. The second mahasantri highlights the difficulty of communicating with native speakers, where confusion in responses can lead to discomfort in the conversation. Additionally, the third mahasantri is concerned that they will not know the discussed topic if they do not understand the conversation. They all feel anxious when listening to English because they cannot understand the speaker's message.

Question number 7: What was your perception of the importance of listening skills in learning English?

All three respondents agreed that listening skills are essential for learning English and are the foundation for developing other language skills. The first mahasantris said that listening skills are the most important among various language skills for them. The second mahasantris added that listening skills can be a foundation for learning other skills and help develop language abilities. The third mahasantris said that having good listening skills from the beginning will improve language comprehension in the future, while mistakes in listening can be avoided.

Question number 8: Do you find it easier to understand material that is familiar or related to a topic you are familiar with? How does this affect your listening skills?

According to three respondents, understanding the material becomes easier if they have a connection or relevance to a topic they are familiar with. The first mahasantri said that understanding becomes easier because they already know the material. The second mahasantri emphasized that listening to or reading about particular material makes it easier to understand. The third mahasantri added that familiar material or vocabulary is more accessible to digest, while new material is harder to comprehend.

Question number 9: How often do you listen to English audio in your daily activities?

All three respondents indicated that they rarely listen to English audio in their daily activities, such as conversations and the like, but they often listen to English music. The first and second mahasantri said that they listen to English music more often than they watch movies or read books in English, with the activity of listening to music usually done while cleaning or on a trip. The third mahasantri also mentioned that they listen to English music more often than they watch movies or read books in English. If they do, it usually has subtitles.

Mahasantris' perception of their English listening comprehension ability

Based on a literature review by Hamouda (2013), listening is the first skill that has to be mastered by the students. Based on the results of this self-assessment, listening is one of the most difficult English skills (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Whereas by mastering English, a person can expand the reach of communication with people from various countries, gain access to wider global information, and increase opportunities in careers and businesses (Aisyah, 2021). When listening comprehension forces them to process information directly without any time to stop, they will be free to understand the writing slowly while reading or writing. Mahasantris' assessments of their ability to understand English listening are influenced by their experiences with language exposure and relative competence in other language skills. According to research data, many mahasantris believe listening is much more challenging than reading and writing. Based on the results, the "average" percentage of 62% (13 out of 21 mahasantris) on the listening statement dominates among other English skills.

EFL students also frequently struggle, mainly when listening to longer materials or when delivered at a challenging speed. The results of the interviews in the current case study demonstrate that they acknowledged having trouble listening to English-language discussions or materials that contain words or emotions they are not familiar with. In the interviews, they expressed discomfort with certain accents and vocabulary terminology (e.g., medical or business terms). Therefore, teaching important terminology first and leading conversations about idioms can help students overcome this challenge (La'biran & Dewi, 2023). Moreover, different accents from some regions can affect the comprehension of messages, and familiar accents make it easier for them to understand the meaning of speech (Bloomfield et al., 2010). Therefore, they must adapt to pronunciations they are not used to hearing.

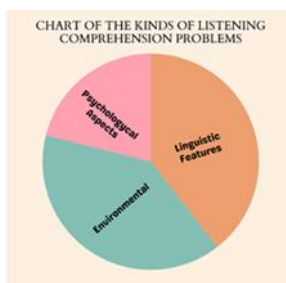
Furthermore, the nature of this qualitative study provides a clearer idea of the anxiety experienced by students in listening to English audio. Based on the interview responses, participants revealed nervousness or even frustration when working on listening tasks involving fast speech or new vocabulary. As many as 43% of questionnaire respondents said that when they think of anticipated answers or specific terms, they quickly forget or lose concentration, indicating internal pressure to "answer correctly" quickly. As stated by Flowerdew and Miller (1996), the issues revealed by students incorporated the quick speed of conveyance, new wording and ideas, trouble, and concentration. They are forced to concentrate on the text-based aspect. Hear a word and repeat it. "I will hear a word and repeat it repeatedly" (Richard, 1995). According to Rubin (1994), emphasizing the gist of the whole listening

material instead of the meaning of individual words when listeners encounter unknown words, which may cause them to stop and think about the word's meaning, causes them to miss the next part of the speech (Gilakjani, A. P., & Ahmadi, M. R., 2011). This approach can be very detrimental when the focus shifts from overall understanding to interpreting individual terms. This makes them more anxious when faced with previously unknown vocabulary because when one feels uncomfortable, their listening ability is greatly reduced (Hamouda, 2013).

Psychological discomfort may affect their perceptions expressed in the interview sessions. The students revealed that they often worry when using new terms because they fear misunderstanding their meaning. Because of this anxiety, they feel less competent and often revert to “safe” language learning activities that do not involve high-level listening comprehension. As stated by Golchi (2012), anxiety has a huge impact while learning English as a foreign language. This affects their perception of their abilities and confidence. In the EFL context, the demands of real-time language processing increase anxiety, especially in listening. English is not only a language course that provides basic knowledge, but it also enhances students’ capacity to broaden their horizons and learn about different cultures in the world (Chen et al., 2012). By understanding these psychological impacts, instructors can help students overcome listening anxiety by using optimal and controlled rate adjustments in listening exercises and exposure to various accents, as well as recognising individual phonemes, syllables, and stresses, syllable reduction due to weak or missing forms, and assimilation (Golchi, 2012, and Rubin, 1994).

In addition, their perception of listening as the most challenging English language skill significantly influenced their approach to learning. Three mahasantris who participated in the interviews acknowledged that they had trouble comprehending direct language and understanding foreign accents, strengthening their belief that listening is hard by nature. This perception, in turn, influenced their learning strategies, often leading them to avoid activities that actually can improve their listening skills, such as interacting with daily language in their learning environment or with native speakers and then attempting to complete complex listening tasks. This means that student beliefs, elements in the learning environment, and prior learning experiences influence student perceptions of the learning environment (Ashwin & Trigwell, 2012). Instead, their perceptions form a cycle in which poor performance reinforces their negative beliefs about their abilities, ultimately impacting their comprehension of English listening. Positive student perceptions directly influence specific learning outcomes like academic achievement, skill performance, and motivation for learning (Lizzio et al., 2002).

The kinds of listening comprehension problems encountered by mahasantris



The listening comprehension problems Mahasantris faces are diverse and can be categorized into linguistic, psychological, and environmental challenges. These findings provide a deeper understanding of each type of problem and its impact on mahasantris’ listening comprehension:

Linguistic Features: Mahasantris face linguistic features, such as when dealing with complex sentence structures or grammatical forms, unfamiliar words, and understanding the speaker's message or meaning. Unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, and idioms

were among students' difficulties in understanding spoken content (Silviyanti et al., 2020). Additionally, Jyoti (2020) highlighted that students encounter challenges in listening comprehension related to the listening material, specifically with unfamiliar words, lengthy, complex texts, and difficult grammatical structures. For example, listening practice at level B2 in audio 3 shows a high error rate (up to 81% or about 17 out of 21 respondents' wrong answers) for tasks involving complex syntax and diverse language. Based on the questionnaire data result, 38% or around 8 out of 21 mahasantris indicated that listening comprehension was hampered by their inability to deduce the meaning of words. And in the interview session, they admitted difficulties with foreign vocabulary. Especially the second and third mahasantris. The second mahasantri said foreign vocabulary is difficult to understand if only heard without knowing how to read and write it. The third mahasantri added that vocabulary often heard is easier to understand, while vocabulary rarely heard is difficult to understand in conversation. These difficulties included the complexity of understanding every single word in incoming speech, interpreting the meaning of lengthy spoken texts, dealing with unfamiliar words, grappling with difficult grammatical structures, and encountering new vocabulary (La'biran, 2023). Students may improve their listening comprehension by being exposed to more complex words and phrases and practicing colloquial expressions. Tactics like pre-teaching important terminology and leading conversations on idioms may help students overcome these challenges (La'biran & Dewi, 2023).

The Affect Rate of Speech: The speech rate poses a significant challenge, as faster speech often leads to missed information or misunderstanding of meaning. This case study highlights mahasantris' subjective experiences with fast speech, where they reported feeling that speaking too fast would lead to misunderstanding of meaning and that it would be easier if the rate of speech were slower. In listening practice audio 9, for example, which involved complex "project management" terminology at 568 wpm, 76% or about 16 out of 21 mahasantris answered incorrectly. Based on the results of the questionnaire data, 38% or about 8 out of 21 students reported difficulty understanding speech at variable speeds, and 24% or about 5 out of 21 students were recorded as always having difficulty. These results suggest that inconsistent speech rate substantially affects students' ability to comprehend spoken language effectively. Furthermore, the results of interviews with three students strengthen this statement. In the interview, question number 3, they revealed that native speakers who speak slowly will be easier to understand than native speakers who speak quickly. These findings support the idea that EFL students have issues listening to scholastic addresses. The issues revealed by students incorporated the quick speed of conveyance, new wording and ideas, trouble concentrating, and issues related to the physical condition (Flowerdew & Miller, 1996).

Environmental challenges: The quality of listening materials plays a significant role in mahasantris' comprehension. Mahasantris has difficulty focusing and interpreting the content accurately when working on tasks with poor recording quality, such as those interrupted by background noise or low volume. On the questionnaire data result, 43% or about 9 out of 21 mahasantris reported losing concentration due to poor recording quality, and listening tasks with unclear audio have significantly higher error rates (Underwood, 1989). And during the interview, the second mahasantri emphasized that listening to the teacher's words in the learning environment can influence how they read and pronounce words. This can also be interpreted as, if when the teacher says something in English, while the sound quality is poor, mahasantris might not be able to hear clearly what the teacher is saying. Limited materials and equipment, Joseph (2008) stated that students may encounter confusion if the materials are lengthy, too abstract, and poorly organized. Other than that, if the listening equipment is not complete, students might be unable to do many activities.

This case study revealed that mahasantris are often aware of these technical limitations. However, they struggle to compensate for them and even lose interest or motivation in listening

to English audio, especially when combined with complex vocabulary or fast speech. These findings underscore the need for high-quality audio materials and a controlled listening environment to optimize comprehension. Based on the questionnaire data result, 57% or about 12 out of 21 mahasantris often use their prior knowledge to grasp spoken texts. During the interview, they revealed that familiar material or vocabulary is more accessible to digest, while new material is harder to comprehend. And they agreed that familiar topics make understanding what they are listening to and improving their listening skills easier. Xuyen (2018) added that the listener's limited knowledge of English linguistic features, such as pronunciation, contractions, accents, and discourse markers, the listener's lack of listening strategies and concentration, and the effect of noisy classrooms resulting from poorly-equipped classrooms. All of these factors can contribute to problems in listening.

Psychological Aspects (Anxiety): Psychological barriers, particularly anxiety related to listening comprehension, were among the most significant problems observed. According to listening practice, at the A1 Elementary level, 76% or 16 out of 21 mahasantris struggled to answer correctly. Although at a fairly low level, the majority of them answered incorrectly. Based on the questionnaire responses, 62% or about 13 out of 21 mahasantris often lost concentration when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, and 43% or about 9 out of 21 mahasantris reported being constantly distracted by poor recording quality. Furthermore, during the interview, three students felt anxious when listening to English because they could not understand the speaker's message. These responses are consistent with the theory of listening anxiety, which states that when a person feels nervous or anxious, he or she may not be concentrating. When one feels uncomfortable, his or her ability to listen is greatly reduced (Lily, 2015; Hamouda, 2013). This anxiety, described by Graham (2006), is the major listening issue stated by foreign language learners, which was identified with quick conveyance of content, leading to failure in distinguishing and identifying words in a flow of input. This means that psychological barriers, especially anxiety, significantly impact the listening comprehension abilities of mahasantris. High levels of anxiety can disrupt concentration, making it difficult for learners to process spoken language effectively.

To put it briefly, this study highlights many of the problems that mahasantris encounter regarding listening comprehension in English. According to the findings of the examination of listening practice, questionnaires, and interviews, the most important linguistic features influencing their listening skills were speaking speed, terminology, the usage of foreign words, slang, and jargon. Furthermore, the learning environment, poor audio quality, and lack of interest in the topic matter all affect comprehension levels. Furthermore, psychologically, worries and anxiety during listening tasks affect concentration and confidence because of unknown words. Speaking speed (linguistic feature) is the most important element influencing mahasantris' listening comprehension overall, as seen by the high rate of errors that occur when speaking speed increases, especially when discussing subjects that mahasantris are somewhat familiar with. Foreign vocabulary and the learning environment come next. The three mahasantris acknowledged in the interviews that the most significant factors were linguistic features (speed of speech), the learning environment, and the last is psychological aspects (anxiety). They thought that being in a place where English was frequently used helped them comprehend audio more easily, they found it easier to understand audio at a slower speed, and they all felt anxious when listening to English too fast because they could not understand the speaker's speed.

CONCLUSION

The research has identified several prominent listening comprehension problems that mahasantris encounter when attempting to understand English. Among the most common difficulties reported were struggles with unfamiliar vocabulary, accents, and the fast pace of speech. Many mahasantris indicated that they often lose concentration when they come across new or unfamiliar words, which disrupts their overall understanding of the listening material. Additionally, a significant portion of the participants expressed frustration with poor recording quality, which further hampers their ability to fully comprehend the content. These issues highlight the crucial need for mahasantris to engage in focused vocabulary development and to be exposed to a variety of accents to improve their listening flexibility. Furthermore, improving the quality of audio recordings used in listening exercises would help provide a clearer, more accurate listening experience for students. Beyond the linguistic and technical challenges, psychological factors such as anxiety also play a significant role in hindering listening comprehension. Studies have found that when students feel anxious or stressed, their ability to focus and process English listening decreases. Therefore, it is important to not only address these external challenges but also provide a supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety. Implementing strategies that provide consistent practice, reduce stress, improve their abilities, and help them overcome the listening comprehension challenges they face.

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