Investigating media and strategy used by the students to improve their listening skill

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ABSTRACT

Listening is one of the most important skills in learning English. In improving listening skills, students need the right media and strategies. Each student uses strategies to improve their listening skills by seeing how they interact with the media they use to improve their listening skills. This study aims to investigate the media and strategies used by students to improve listening skills. This research was conducted at Ahmad Dahlan University. This research was conducted using qualitative methods. The subjects of this study were 8th semester English Education students who had passed the TOEFL test with the highest score before the proposal seminar exam. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The data analysis technique is based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) theory which includes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results of this study show that the media used by students to improve listening skills include audio media, video media, equipment and people media consisting of music, podcasts, audio books, movies, TikTok videos, daily vlogs, and native speakers. In improving listening skills, students also use several strategies. The results of this study show that the strategies used by students are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies.

1. Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication, utilizing sounds, symbols, and words to articulate ideas and thoughts. Language is the primary method of human communication, consisting of words that can be used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed through speech, gesture, and writing (Oxford English Dictonary, 2023). English has also become an international language in global communication, especially in education and business. In Indonesia, English has become mandatory in various educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities. In learning English, students will learn listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Students majoring in English Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to evaluate their proficiency and identify areas of improvement. The TOEFL assesses competencies in listening comprehension, structure and written expression, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. For the preparation, students majoring in English Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan already get some material in several courses. In the listening

comprehension section, they will learn listening subjects. In structure, written expression, and reading comprehension in grammar and reading. Even though they have studied in several sections, they still need some help. To pass the English Proficiency Test, students must reach a minimum score of 475. Based on preliminary data on the results of the English Language Proficiency Test (TOEFL) in the English Education Program Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, 79% of students from the class of 2020 still need to pass the English professional test. Several students who did not pass the professional English test received scores ranging from 330 to 473. From several sections in the English proficiency test (TOEFL), listening is one of the skills that must be paid attention to because some students still need help understanding dialogue in the listening section.

Due to the aspects above, listening is one of the most essential skills in learning English. Cao and Lin (2020) emphasize that listening is critical because it enables individuals to receive and process information. According to Febiyanti et al. (2021), listening plays a vital role in communication around 40-50% of the time. According to Hamouda (2013), listening skills are critical in obtaining understood input. Like reading, listening is a receptive skill requiring appropriate input for individuals to enhance their knowledge and communicate effectively (Gulec & Durmus, 2015). Listening is not just the process of hearing sounds accurately and swiftly; it involves understanding the meaning of what is heard, making it a complex and challenging skill (Gulec & Durmus, 2015). Jou (2017) defines listening as the ability to identify what others understand, which involves understanding the speaker's accent, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This means that listening is more challenging than people think. Quite a few students still need help listening to videos or audio in English. Students often experience difficulties in listening comprehension due to several factors such as accent, speed of speech, vocabulary, grammar, topic, and the complex nature of spoken language. Understanding students' difficulties becomes the basis for investigating media and practical strategies to improve listening skills.

Media is a communication tool used to carry messages for instructional purposes and facilitate communication. Smaldino (2014) notes that the term media comes from Latin, meaning 'carrier' or 'introducer,' indicating its role in transmitting information from a source to a recipient. Naz and Akbar (2008) define media as a communication channel derived from the word "between," which facilitates conveying messages from the sender to the recipient, thereby helping student learning. In addition, the media can significantly improve students' abilities, especially their listening skills. Harmer (2008) emphasized that media can support students in the listening-learning process. The main goal of media use is to develop comprehensive competencies, enabling students to improve their abilities and accurately receive and interpret messages during communication. According to Prasetya et al. (2014), using media in the learning process can generate desire and motivation and impact abilities due to psychological effects. Apart from that, media is also helpful as a communicative tool, a source of motivation, a tool for understanding perception, and a tool for developing individuality because it has different learning styles and motivations (Sanjaya, 2012). Van et al. (2021) highlight that media has great potential to improve language skills and encourage the English language learning process. Additionally, strategies play an essential role in mastering listening skills. Although some students may lack specific strategies for listening practice, active listening requires certain comprehension strategies.

Chilkiewicz (2015) defines strategy as overcoming a problem or task. In developing listening skills, students need strategies to understand material effectively. These strategies, known as learning strategies, are used to achieve specific learning goals, which involve the resources ("what") and methods ("how") used in the learning process (Hardan, 2013). Rost (2001) describes listening strategies as plans for processing incoming speech, especially when the listener realizes their understanding is incomplete or partial. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) stated that learning strategies can be categorized into metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective. This strategy will train students to control their learning and highlight their characteristics in the learning process (Sulistyowati et al., 2022).

Improving listening skills is closely related to the media and strategies used by the students. In improving listening skills, students still have difficulty understanding what native speakers say. This is due to several factors, such as accent, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Therefore, every student needs media and strategies to improve listening skills. Media use in improving listening skills is highly dependent on the strategies students use. Understanding how students engage with various media and the strategies they employ provides valuable insight into the development of practical listening skills.

This study aimed to investigate the types of media and strategies students use to improve their listening skills. By examining preferences for specific media types, frequency of use, context of choice, and students' strategies, this study sought to uncover the correlation between media consumption habits and improved listening skills.

2. Method

This research uses qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social or human phenomena. This methodology describes phenomena and characteristics, focusing on current occurrences. The primary research instrument was semi-structured interviews conducted online via Google Meet and WhatsApp voice calls. The study's subjects were 8th-semester English Education students at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan who had passed the English proficiency test (TOEFL) before their proposal seminar. Purposive sampling was used to select five students as research subjects with the criteria of getting TOEFL scores above 475. Data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

     a.   Media Used by the Students to Improve Listening Skills

In response to the first research question, the participants indicated that they usually use various media to improve their listening skills, including audio, video, equipment, and people. The audio media that students usually use are music and audiobooks. As Student One said:

"Usually, I often listen to music."

The student statement shows that music is commonly used to improve listening skills. The music that students usually use is from the Spotify platform. It can be seen from the statements of student three:

"I listen to music more often; the music might be on Spotify."

The interview results from the students show that Spotify music can be a medium to improve listening skills. Student Three also stated that she often listens to songs and added that the songs are most likely on Spotify. Besides music, the second audio medium is audiobooks. Student five said:

"Listen to audiobooks because I also like to read."

Student five decided to listen to audiobooks because have some hobbies to read. Audiobooks provide a more structured story and allow listeners to practice understanding spoken language in different contexts. In addition, listening to audiobooks can help expand your vocabulary and language comprehension. Therefore, both approaches can improve listening skills, depending on each individual's preferences and learning goals.

The second media students use is video media, consisting of movies, TikTok videos, daily vlogs, music videos, and podcasts. Student one and student two said:

"Usually, I listen to songs and watch TikTok videos."

"Usually watch daily vlogs on YouTube."

These media fall into the same media type but in different applications. Tiktok videos are used as learning media because they present content with short video durations so that students do not feel bored. Meanwhile, YouTube videos present various content references for learning, such as daily vlogs, podcasts, and music. As student four and student five said:

"Most often podcasts anyway. If you go through YouTube, you can choose. We can choose what we want to watch if there are many media on YouTube. There is much variety there."

"Most often, it is music anyway. Because I listen to music every day, usually streaming YouTube"

Apart from TikTok videos and daily vlogs, students also use video podcasts and video music to improve listening. Initially, music and podcasts were included in the audio media category. However, due to technological developments, podcasts and music have developed into video media.

The last video media used is the movie. As student five said:

"Usually, I listen to music or watch movies."

Student four also has the same statement.

"Maybe audiovisual. Podcasts and movies usually."

The two statements show that movies are used as media to improve listening skills. The third media used is media equipment consisting of cellphones, laptops, and headsets. As student one and student three said:

"Sometimes I use a laptop if I listen to music from Spotify."

"Usually, I listen to music or watch movies using my cellphone."

Student four also added a statement about using headsets to improve listening skills.

"I look for a quiet place or use a headset so I will not be disturbed..."

Students use these various media to help improve their listening skills. Media equipment is used according to student needs. For example, when experiencing interference while listening, students use a headset to focus on hearing the material. The last media used is people media. People media found in this study are native speakers. As student four said:

"At first, I listened to music, then movies; after the movie, I continued to listen to podcasts, then games, and finally, until now, I can chat and hear from native speakers directly."

The native speaker that student four found came from the game and became a familiar friend. Student four describes his journey from listening to music and watching movies to interacting directly with native speakers, showing a progression from passive to interactive listening. The media used to improve listening skills is in the form of applications or equipment and in the form of people.

b. Strategy Used by the Students to Improve Listening Skills

In answering the second research question, the participants used various strategies to improve their listening skills. These strategies included metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective approaches. Metacognitive strategies used by students were in the aspects of planning, monitoring, solving comprehension problems, and evaluation. Metacognitive strategies allow students to organize their learning schedule independently so that students can have a goal to achieve learning goals. As the student said:

"For example, I want to learn to listen, sometimes I prepare a note or pencil to record it."

This is included in the planning aspect because students prepare tools to improve listening skills. The second strategy is the cognitive strategy. Cognitive strategies used by students consist of four aspects: inference, elaboration, summarization, and translation. These four aspects can help students build knowledge through improving listening skills. As the student said:

"I always try to link new information with what I already know."

The statement shows that students try to understand the source by connecting new information with information they already know. The last strategy is the socio-affective strategy. This strategy connects the student's personality with the people around them. This strategy is usually used to collaborate with others to learn together. Student 5 said:

"I will discuss it with my friends. Even the discussion uses English or Indonesian. We often discuss each other."

This shows that students improve their listening skills alone and work with others to get feedback and have discussions. Students customize these strategies and choose appropriate media based on their individual needs. For example, they repeatedly watch videos, look up new vocabulary, and converse with native speakers. As student two said:

"There is no specific strategy; if you want to understand, you usually just listen to it repeatedly. Listen to videos where we can still understand the words."

Students stated that there are no specific strategies for improving listening skills, but some activities are most effective. Some practical activities to improve listening skills are listening repeatedly, taking notes, choosing media and topics you like, and applying active or passive listening.

3.2. Discussion

a. Media Used by the Student to Improve Listening Skills

1) Audio Media

The audio media used by the students were music and audiobooks. Three participants used music to improve listening skills, and one used audiobooks. The music used by students is on the Spotify platform. Usually, the music listened to is based on trends on social media or according to what students like. The Spotify platform is one of the audio media that improves listening skills because it provides playlists that match students' favorite songs. In addition, Spotify also provides lyrics that make it easier for students to pronounce the lyrics they hear. This shows that the Spotify platform students use provides the playlists that students need to make music selection easier. It agrees with Fitria's research (2021), which states that students can use audio music media such as Spotify to train and improve their listening skills. This also aligns with Waloyo's research (2019), which shows music improves listening skills. Music is entertainment and language learning, significantly improving listening and enriching English vocabulary.

The second audio media used by students is audiobooks. The audiobooks students use are on a web called "Light Novel World." Apart from providing novels, this web also provides audiobooks. Audiobooks are used by students when students feel tired of reading. So, this shows that improving listening skills can be balanced with things that are liked. This agrees with Fitria's research (2021), which shows that students use web audiobooks to improve their listening skills. The audiobooks used in the study are Storynory, Loyal Books, and Story Online.

2) Video Media

The second media used by students is video media. Video media found in this study are TikTok videos, daily vlogs, music videos, podcasts, and movies. Students use TikTok videos because they have a short duration, so they do not make them bored. The results of this study are not in line with Waloyo's research (2019), which says that the applications mentioned by the students, YouTube, Spotify, Podcast, BBC Learning, Cambridge Dictionary, U Dictionary, Instagram, Twitter, Joox, Duolingo, Google translate, TOEFL, Tune In, and Pronunciation in use. The study shows that TikTok videos are not used to improve listening skills.

Podcasts, daily vlogs, and music videos are other video media used to improve listening skills. All three are available on the YouTube platform. Students use daily vlogs because they use everyday language and are easily understood. Meanwhile, students choose

podcasts and music because the YouTube platform has a wide variety of content and provides lyrics and video features. Using video media on the YouTube platform aligns with Waloyo's research (2019), which says that YouTube can improve vocabulary and listening. The last video media is a movie. Students usually use the Netflix platform. Using movies to improve listening aligns with Simamora and Oktaviani's (2020) research, which says that watching English movies triggers an understanding of the content.

3) Equipment media

The third media found is media equipment. Equipment used by students includes laptops, cell phones, and headsets. These three media are used according to student needs. For example, students use laptops when listening to music at home and cell phones to listen to music outside the home. Students also use headsets to reduce distractions when listening. These results support the conclusions drawn in Wijayanti's research (2021), which found that computers and gadgets accommodate students' listening comprehension process.

4) People Media

The last media found is people media. People's media are found in the form of native speakers. Students communicate with native speakers to improve their listening skills. So, the media used to improve listening skills is a platform or content and can be people. This is in agreement with Loren's (2017) finding, which shows that when outside the classroom, students interact with locals to speak English.

b. Strategies Used by Students to Improve Listening Skills

1) Metacognitive Strategy

Metacognitive strategies teach students to manage their learning schedule independently. This strategy also trains students to achieve learning targets independently by preparing learning objectives, monitoring understanding, solving problems while learning, and conducting evaluations. These results align with Waloyo's research (2019), which says that students use metacognitive strategies by determining the purpose of listening activities to help guess general information or content from the sources listened to.

2) Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies to improve listening skills involve the mental processes used to comprehend, recall, and interpret information heard. An effective strategy is metacognition, awareness, and control of one's thought processes. This includes planning the listening, monitoring auditory comprehension, and evaluating the results after listening. Another strategy is to note critical points to focus attention and recall information. Also, predicting the content before listening helps understand the context and speeds up comprehension. Using inference to interpret implied meanings and unfamiliar words is essential for compelling listening. Lastly, connecting new information with prior knowledge helps strengthen comprehension and retention of information. By combining these strategies, you can improve your overall listening skills. This study's results align with Prayogi's et al. research (2018), which says three strategies are used to improve listening skills, but students use cognitive strategies most widely.

3) Socio-affective Strategy

Socio-affective strategies focus on the social and emotional aspects of learning and effectively improve listening skills. It involves social interaction and emotional management to improve comprehension and information absorption. For example, participating in group discussions or communicating with native speakers of the target language provides opportunities to hear different voice variations and intonations. This helps expand the listener's understanding of the nuances of the language. In addition, addressing emotions such as fear and anxiety can help students listen more intently. Socio-affective strategies improve technical listening skills and increase confidence and motivation to participate in social interactions related to the language being learned. This study aligns with Awinindia's research (2023), which said that students use socio-affective strategies by determining how to practice English with other students.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, students improve listening skills using several media, including: 1) audio media: music and audiobooks; 2) video media: TikTok videos, daily vlogs, video podcasts, movies, music videos; 3) media equipment: cellphones and laptops, 4) people media: native speakers. Meanwhile, the strategies used by students consist of three types of strategies: 1) metacognitive strategies: planning, monitoring, solving comprehension problems, and evaluation; 2) cognitive strategies: inference, elaboration, summarization, and translation; 3) socio-affective strategies: asking clarifying questions, collaboration, and reducing anxiety. A limitation of this study is the need for more generalizability. This study classified different media types, but this classification may only partially cover the various media formats and platforms available to students. This research focuses on media and strategies to improve listening skills. Therefore, future researchers can research the effect of media and strategies to improve listening skills.

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