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Factors Impeding Listening Skills in 4th Grade

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the factors inhibiting the listening skills of five elementary school students in a public school in Sumedang Regency. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study method. Data were collected through tests and interviews. The data analysis process included data identification, classification, description, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through triangulation. The results reveal several factors hindering students' listening skills: (1) lack of interest in the Indonesian language subject; (2) insufficient active participation in learning; (3) weak questioning skills and fear of assessment; (4) difficulties in comprehending and retaining taught material; (5) inappropriate selection of instructional media; and (6) lack of learning motivation. To address these challenges, the study suggests that teachers utilize engaging instructional media, such as audiovisual tools, during listening activities.

Introduction

The Indonesian Language subject is a compulsory subject for students in both lower and upper grades. Within the Indonesian Language curriculum, there are four key language skills that students are expected to cultivate, develop, and master: listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills. Listening

skills serve as the foundation for acquiring other language competencies. Prihatin (2017) asserts that listening is a natural precursor to mastering speaking and other language skills. It is the first linguistic skill humans acquire and plays a decisive role in an individual's first-language development.

Listening is a crucial aspect of interpersonal communication (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). Khaliq et al. (2020) define listening as an active process of receiving information from others that involves concentration and personal comprehension. Similarly, Putri et al. (2022) describe listening as the activity of decoding meaning from auditory input. This skill is essential across various contexts, as individuals are expected to practice effective listening within family settings, educational environments, and broader society (Pratiwi & Zulfadeina, 2022). Listening competence manifests through several cognitive processes: receiving oral symbols, demonstrating appreciation, achieving comprehension, and performing interpretation to obtain information and capture messages conveyed through spoken language (Cusnaki & Syamsudin, 2022). Based on these conceptualizations, listening can be characterized as a complex process of auditory information reception that integrates concentration, comprehension, and interpretation to derive meaning from spoken communication.

Listening fundamentally serves the primary objective of information acquisition. Munar & Suyadi (2021) delineate four specific purposes of listening: (1) educational or informational gain, (2) appreciation, (3) personal engagement, and (4) problem resolution within accessible contexts. Complementing this perspective, Kurniaman & Huda (2018) emphasize that listening aims to: obtain information, comprehend content, and decode the intended message conveyed through oral discourse. Synthesizing these perspectives, the essential purposes of listening can be summarized as: (1) acquiring novel information, (2) accurately interpreting the speaker's message, (3) extracting the core meaning from verbal communication, and (4) facilitating learning and conceptual development regarding the presented subject matter.

Listening constitutes the primary and most dominant language skill in daily life (Hidayatullah et al., 2018; Nurhayani, 2010). This skill holds significant importance as it facilitates information acquisition and knowledge enhancement (Ayuanita & Hafid Effendy, 2022). Listening is regarded as the most crucial and sophisticated language activity, as it transcends mere hearing by incorporating essential elements of comprehension. While some individuals may perceive listening as a relatively simple skill, research demonstrates that without proper cultivation, it can

prove remarkably challenging to master (Lestari et al., 2020; Praheto & Sayekti, 2018). Listeners frequently encounter difficulties in message reception due to various interfering factors, often resulting in suboptimal information processing or even misinterpretation. Achieving complete and accurate understanding requires listeners to actively engage in both linguistic and intellectual processing of auditory input.

To achieve listening comprehension objectives, educators must stimulate student engagement in the learning process through active, creative, and innovative instructional strategies. Azhari et al. (2023) posit that auditory processing contributes significantly to knowledge acquisition. Research indicates that humans acquire approximately 85% of their knowledge through auditory channels, yet retain only 20% of heard information. These findings clearly demonstrate the substantial impact of listening skills in daily life.

Listening comprehension comprises three essential components that require careful consideration: (1) the listener, (2) the speaker, and (3) the listening material (Diyahningsih et al., 2023). Many individuals fail to recognize that listening constitutes an active and cognitively demanding skill. This process involves dual responsibilities: speakers must articulate their intended message clearly, while listeners must actively process and comprehend the communicated content. Effective listening necessitates focused attention, critical evaluation, logical reasoning, accurate interpretation, and cognitive visualization. Furthermore, competent listeners employ perspective-taking strategies, positioning themselves in the speaker's conceptual framework to achieve genuine understanding of the discourse.

The present state of students' listening comprehension abilities raises significant concerns. Research indicates that listening skills are often undervalued and perceived as less important compared to other language competencies (Satria, 2017). This phenomenon is evidenced by multiple findings demonstrating that listening skills have not received adequate attention from educators in school settings (Ernawati & Rasna, 2020). Supporting this observation, Zekiyah et al. (2023) revealed in their study that students' listening proficiency remains suboptimal, with assessment results showing that 22 out of 30 students scored poorly in listening comprehension tests.

The development of students' listening comprehension skills is intrinsically linked to the teacher's role. As primary actors in the educational process, teachers occupy a

fundamental position as educators who continuously guide students to ensure effective learning progression (Idzhar, 2016). Professional teachers demonstrate their expertise through competent performance of instructional duties, exhibiting mastery in both subject matter and pedagogical methods. Furthermore, as Warsono (2017) elucidates, teachers embody the Javanese philosophical concept of "digugu lan ditiru" (to be believed and emulated). The "digugu" aspect signifies that teachers serve as reliable knowledge sources due to their extensive expertise, while "ditiru" implies that their moral integrity and ethical conduct make them worthy role models.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study is motivated to investigate the inhibiting factors affecting listening comprehension skills in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. The research aims to provide deeper insights into the fundamental barriers that impede students' development of Indonesian language listening proficiency.

Research Methodology

This qualitative descriptive case study examines inhibiting factors affecting listening comprehension skills among five fourth-grade students at a public elementary school in Sumedang Regency, employing three data collection methods: (1) written essay tests based on an audio narrative ("Known for Dancing" - sourced from a video platform with clear audio and minimal visuals) to assess listening proficiency, (2) interviews identifying students' learning difficulties, and (3) documentation of student activities and test results. Data analysis followed systematic stages: identification, classification, description, and conclusion drawing, with methodological triangulation ensuring validity through cross-verification of test results, interview responses, and documentary evidence.

Results and Discussion

This study employed direct classroom observation to examine the efficacy of Indonesian language instruction in fourth-grade settings, specifically investigating (1) students' listening comprehension strategies during teacher-led content delivery and (2) their interactive engagement patterns throughout the learning process. The observational protocol systematically assessed three critical dimensions: (a) quantitative measures of student participation, (b) sustained concentration metrics during instructional segments, and (c) emergent comprehension barriers during material assimilation, thereby providing a triangulated understanding of pedagogical effectiveness and learning obstacles.

The observation process was conducted during a single instructional session spanning four academic hours (equivalent to 180 minutes), followed by administration of a standardized listening comprehension assessment designed to evaluate students' information extraction accuracy and written reconstruction competence from auditory input. This study further investigated potential moderating variables affecting listening proficiency across three domains: (1) classroom environmental factors, (2) instructional methodology efficacy, and (3) intrinsic learner characteristics, employing a tripartite analytical framework to identify both exogenous and endogenous influences on comprehension outcomes.

Results

The study commenced with systematic observation of the teaching and learning process in the Indonesian Language subject, conducted over four instructional hours (equivalent to one classroom session). Following the instructional period, students were administered a listening comprehension assessment. Participants were instructed to produce written responses based on the auditory input received during the lesson. Observational data revealed several behavioral patterns: (1) instances of inattentiveness and apparent daydreaming among certain students, and (2) disruptive behaviors, including peer interactions and play activities during teacher explanations, resulting in partial disengagement from the instructional content. Assessment results demonstrated significant variability in fourth-grade students' listening proficiency levels. The quantitative outcomes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Students' Listening Tests

Question Items	Student ID				
	AF	LP	PL	RA	YS
Mention the names of the villages described above and the names of each dance!	5	4	4	2	3
How many dancers are there in the Seudati dance?	0	2	0	0	0
Which dance depicts a princess in a flower garden?	2	0	0	2	2
What is the name of the dance whose movements are like silat movements?	2	2	2	0	2
There are dances that are performed for a specific purpose. Mention the name and purpose!	2	3	2	2	3
Score	11	11	8	6	10
Score Scale 100	42	42	30	23	38
Category*	L	L	L	L	L

* Category L = less

The raw scores were converted into percentage values using the formula: $\text{Score (\%)} = (\text{Total Score} / \text{Maximum Score}) \times 100$. Based on this calculation, all five participants' final scores fell within the poor proficiency category. This classification is evident from the score distribution, with the highest achieved score being 42% and the lowest 23%. Further analysis of students' listening comprehension difficulties, as identified through interviews, revealed the following key findings:

1) Interview Analysis with Student AF

Researcher (R): Could you explain why you appeared distracted during the learning session?

AF: I felt bored.

R: Do you enjoy Indonesian language lessons?

AF: No, the learning activities are not engaging.

R: Were you able to comprehend the teacher's explanations?

AF: No.

R: When you didn't understand, what prevented you from asking the teacher for clarification?

AF: I felt embarrassed.

The interview findings indicate a distinct lack of student engagement with Indonesian language instruction. This is empirically evidenced by participants' explicit expressions of both disinterest in the subject matter and reported experiences of boredom, which they attribute to unstimulating learning methodologies.

2) Formal Academic Translation of Interview Transcript with Student LP

Researcher (R): Did you pay attention during the lesson?

LP: No.

R: What caused your inattention?

LP: The lesson was unengaging and monotonous.

R: Did you comprehend the teacher's explanation?

LP: No.

R: What prevented you from asking the teacher for clarification?

LP: Fear of reprimand.

The interview findings reveal that students exhibited inattentiveness during instructional sessions due to perceived monotony and lack of engagement in the learning activities. This disengagement directly contributed to their failure to comprehend the lesson content delivered by the teacher. Furthermore, students demonstrated reluctance to seek clarification, primarily stemming from apprehensive attitudes toward the instructor.

3) Formal Academic Translation of Interview Transcript with Student PL

Researcher (R): Could you explain your frequent peer conversations during the lesson?

PL: The learning activities were unstimulating.

R: What specifically made the learning process unstimulating?

PL: I failed to comprehend the instructional content.

R: What prevented you from seeking clarification?

PL: No. (No response provided)

The interview data indicate that students demonstrated limited comprehension of the instructional content. Furthermore, their engagement in off-task conversations during lessons was attributed to perceived unsatisfactory learning experiences.

4) Formal Academic Translation of Interview Transcript with Student RA

Researcher (R): Did you find today's lesson engaging?

RA: No.

R: Could you elaborate on your lack of engagement?

RA: The content was cognitively challenging.

R: What specific aspects posed difficulty?

RA: I experienced retention failure of the narrative content.

The interview data revealed that students exhibited negative attitudes toward the instructional activities due to perceived difficulties in auditory processing and information retention tasks in Indonesian language learning. This finding is corroborated by their consistently low assessment scores.

5) Interview Transcript Analysis with Student YS

Researcher (R): Did you find the instructional session engaging?

YS: No.

R: Could you specify the reason for your disengagement?

YS: I would prefer video-based learning formats.

R: What prompted your conversational interactions during instruction?

YS: Peer-initiated dialogue.

R: To what extent did you comprehend the teacher's instruction?

YS: Minimal comprehension was achieved.

The interview findings indicate that students exhibited a preference for visual-based learning modalities over auditory instruction involving teacher-read texts. This pedagogical disengagement manifested in off-task behaviors, particularly peer conversations during instructional delivery.

A comprehensive analysis of listening comprehension assessments and student interviews identified six primary barriers impeding listening proficiency development: (1) limited interest in Indonesian language instruction, (2) passive

diversified teaching methodologies incorporating audiovisual media, and (iii) proactive engagement strategies to sustain cognitive involvement throughout instructional delivery.

The challenges in students' listening comprehension skills stem from both internal and external factors. Internally, students' disinterest in Indonesian language learning significantly hinders their listening proficiency, as interview data reveal a prevalent perception of the subject as monotonous and unimportant, thereby reducing motivation and engagement. Externally, three key barriers were identified: (1) limited instructional variability in teaching methods, constraining skill development; (2) non-conducive classroom environments, where excessive noise disrupts concentration and impedes material comprehension; and (3) peer-related distractions, as unsupportive social interactions (e.g., sudden conversational disruptions) divert focus from learning tasks. Together, these factors create a cyclical pattern where disinterest and environmental inefficiencies mutually reinforce listening comprehension difficulties.

Discussion

Teacher pedagogical practices play a critical role in the learning process, as educators bear the responsibility of monitoring classroom dynamics to facilitate student development (Lestari et al., 2020). An effective solution to address fourth-grade elementary students' listening comprehension difficulties involves the implementation of engaging audiovisual media during listening activities. Instructional media serve as cognitive stimuli that promote active learning processes (Hayati & Harianto, 2017), with audiovisual tools particularly offering an effective intervention by simultaneously activating visual and auditory learning channels to enhance information processing, retention, and overall engagement in listening tasks.

Conclusion

The study's analysis of fourth-grade elementary students' listening comprehension skills, based on test results and interviews, identified six primary inhibiting factors: (1) limited interest in Indonesian language instruction, (2) insufficient active learning engagement, (3) underdeveloped questioning skills coupled with assessment anxiety, (4) difficulties in comprehending and retaining instructional material, (5) suboptimal selection of instructional media, and (6) inadequate learning motivation. These barriers stem from both internal (student-related) and external (environmental/instructional) factors. As a solution, educators are encouraged to implement engaging audiovisual media during listening activities to enhance multisensory learning and address these multidimensional challenges.

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