

# 1. meaning from passages, and associate what

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1.

Introduction Listening is considered as an important factor which contributes to the development of learners both in daily communication and studying process. Regarding the total time spent on communicating, listening accounted for 40%-50% (Mendelsohn, 1994, cited by Gilakjani & Ahmadi). Moreover, listening comprehension has turned out as a crucial and specific foreign language skill (Byrnes 1984; Dunkel 1991; Joiner 1991; Krashen 1981; cited by Thompson & Rubin, 1996, p.

29, No. 3) leading teachers to find suitable ways to accelerate this skill for their students. A recent result of listening comprehension research (Rubin, 1994 cited by Thompson & Rubin, 1996) indicated five major aspects, which have great influences on listening comprehension: text characteristics, interlocutor characteristics, task characteristics, listener characteristics and process characteristics.

Listening involves a complex process of interpreting and associating meaning from both verbal and non-verbal messages (Nunan, 1998, cited by Gilakjani & Ahmadi). There are two subsuming cognitive processes: bottom-up (data-driven) and top-down (conceptually-driven), which can be used for training learners' ability in listening comprehension skill. The purpose of this research is to facilitate the students' English overall linguistic capability and oral and aural competence. The researcher attempts to discuss the importance of listening comprehension, several difficulties that non-native learners have to overcome in listening comprehension and strategies to resolve this condition.

Findings of this study will be beneficial to foreign language learners for enhancing their listening comprehension ability.

2. Discussion of findings

2. 1. The importance of listening comprehension skills. Listening is the most common used language skill (Morley, 1999; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Purdy (1997) explained listening as “ the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and non – verbal), needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (p. 8) .

Listening comprehension is a logical and coherent process (Rost, 2002). It is also considered theoretically as an effective process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with their current knowledge. To become a good listener, students must have the ability to comprehend the message, the ability to apply a great deal of strategies and interactive processes to make meaning, and the ability to reply to what is said in a wide range of ways, depending on the purpose of the communication. Practicing listening frequently can bring many benefits to the learners in their works at school or future careers. Wolvin and Coakley (1988) supposed that, both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication. 2.

2. Several difficulties in accelerating listening comprehension skills.

Listening comprehension has an essential role in learning foreign languages, the importance of this skill in classroom instruction has been more emphasized than other skills, according to Bird's study (1953), female college students

spent 42% of their total verbal communication time in listening while they spent 25% in speaking, 15% in reading and 18% in writing.

However, learners still have a great deal of difficulties in listening comprehension and they really cannot find the problems to resolve; the teachers somehow pay no attention to this skill in class so the learners also do not have a chance to practice. In addition, Dunkel's (1991b) study reported that international students' academic success in the United States and Canada relied more on reading than listening comprehension, especially for those students in engineering, psychology, chemistry, and computer science. One of the reasons why listening is not given proper attention by the teachers is for the lack of awareness of the significant effect of this skill on the improvement of students in learning foreign languages. Therefore, listening becomes one of the most enormous obstacle in learning foreign language of students, they can have trouble with understanding the meaning of what speakers say, they can also have difficulties in finding the answers for speakers' questions, and they find it very hard to become skilled in this skill. As a consequence, Mendelsohn (1995, p. 133) argues that the task of both language teachers and students is to find the most suitable strategies to facilitate learners' listening comprehension. 2.

3. Strategies for learners to accelerate their listening comprehension. One of the most effective methods learners can become actively involved in controlling their own learning is by using suitable strategies. Vandergift (1999) believed " Strategy development is important for listening training because strategies are conscious means by which learners can guide and

evaluate their own comprehension and responses". Both instructors (Ferris, 1996) and students (Ferris, 1998) acknowledge the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings. Therefore, it is very crucial for learners to find their own strategies to improve their ability in this skill.

The first method should be used by learners is choosing exact sources of listening. Some video updated by foreigners or professional teachers such as: BBC, VOA, students' news, etc. Because native speakers and highly proficient second language learners complete the complicated process of speech comprehension smoothly, learners at lower levels can make some benefits from repeating through the videos. Especially these videos can help learners make acquaintance with listening comprehension and in listening process, they can also improve their vocabulary, their imperfect control of the syntactic and semantic structure of the language, or other limitations with regard to the elements necessary for communication. Stanchina (1987) engaged in a similar study and pointed out that effective learners were good at co-operating their background knowledge with information in listening lesson. Moreover, students tend to be attracted by these types of learning instead of traditional ways.

The second way is co-operating listening with taking note. This strategy is related to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval. When learners can use this strategy fluently, they can improve their listening comprehension extremely. Because this strategy requires learners a wide range of vocabulary and grammars as well as the good ability of using short-term memory.

In addition, the wide range of strategies taught included the following: metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies which contains planning, defining goals, monitoring, and evaluating, can bring great benefits to the learners because this method help learners in managing their time for studying, creating a suitable timetable that they can follow. Besides, cognitive strategies consists of predicting content based on background knowledge, visual clues, genre of the segments...; listening to the known; listening for redundancies; listening to tone of voice and intonation; and resourcing, can have great impacts on learners. Because it raises the confidence of students, with improved self-efficacy, students' ability in listening to a foreign music or movie can be enhanced. Improving listening comprehension is very necessary for learning process of students because listening is considered as the most difficult skill when learning foreign languages as well as it is the foundation for learners to develop other skills.

### 3. Conclusions

This research attempted to give some of the factors that influence students' listening comprehension skill and strategies for improving their listening comprehension.

Non-native learners do not have an innate understanding of what effective listeners do; therefore, it is very necessary for the teachers to share that knowledge with them, especially, through many strategies. To improve learners' listening ability, teachers should not only base their teaching on theoretical principles but also use modern technology which can bring benefits to students. English listening competence is a complicated and difficult skill that needs conscious development.

It can be best developed with practice when students reflect on the process of listening without the threat of evaluation. Listening comprehension may have effects the capacity of improvement in other language skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and translating. Because of its important role, it is essential for teachers to provide students numerous opportunities to practice listening skills and to become actively engaged in listening process.