

**Students' Strategies in Answering the Listening Section of  
USEPT: An Investigation at the English Education Study  
Program of Sriwijaya University**

**A Thesis by:**

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**FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY**

**2023**



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THESIS EXAM

Title : Students' Strategies in Answering the Listening Section of USEPT: An Investigation  
at the English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University

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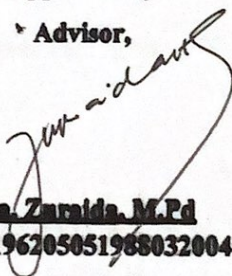
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**PALEMBANG**

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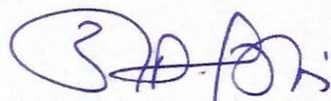


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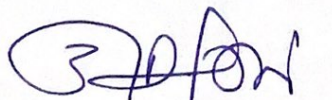
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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

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declare that the thesis entitled "Students' Strategies in Answering the Listening Section of USEPT: An Investigation at the English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University" is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 19, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 2023

The undersigned



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## **DEDICATION**

*This thesis is sincerely dedicated to:*

Allah SWT has given me physical and mental health to finish this thesis.

I would also like to thank half of my soul, my parents,

Didi Susanto & Yuningsih

always give endless support and pray for me.

Also, thank you so much to my beloved brother, Arief Susanto, and my little sister,

Bidari Mey Azwa, who always cheer me up.

They gave me much motivation to finish my thesis.

Thank you.

## **MOTTO**

“Indeed, I am near.” | [Quran 2:186]

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Alhamdulillahirabbil'alamin. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Firstly, I would like to thank Allah SWT for the blessing that has brought me to this path to accomplish an Undergraduate Degree in English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Sriwijaya University.

The researcher realizes that this thesis writing process would not have been possible without the support and inspiration of many valuable individuals around me. Many people around me gave input and advice to complete this thesis. Therefore, I would like to deliver wholehearted gratitude to:

1. My fantastic advisor Dra. Zuraida, M.Pd, for her advice, suggestion, guidance, patience, and dedication in guiding the researcher to finish this study. I'm thankful to have such a patient advisor like her.
2. The Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Sriwijaya University (Dr. Hartono, M.A.), the Head of the Language and Arts Education Department, Dr. Didi Suhendi, M.Hum., and the Head of English Education Study Program, Eryansyah, M.A., Ph.D. for their assistance in administrative matters. The most incredible gratitude is addressed to all lecturers who kindly taught me during my study.
3. The Owner of NPM 201450017, thank you for always being there to accompany and help me from dusk till dawn.
4. My lovely best friends Erina Bunga Saputri, Samudro Lintang Kencono, Lidya Zhafira, Ruth Nabasa, Nabillah Awliyah Safitri, Niken Prameswary, and Elsa Muthia, who always cheer me up. Also, my beloved college friends Vivian, Agnes, Rio, Nurmala, Saidah Sa'iah, Jasmine, Andra, Mariska, Michelle, and Bella, thank you for making my day unforgettable during my college life.

5. SEESPA UNSRI 2019 Palembang, for the support and memories, and thank you for helping me during my study at Sriwijaya University and for whose name I possibly can't mention here. Thank you for everything.
6. The students who have participated in this research. I hope Allah will give many blessings to your life.

Palembang, July 2023



Arvina Yudiagustin



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**ABSTRACT**

Some universities in Indonesia require an English test as a graduation requirement, for example, at Sriwijaya University. Sriwijaya University has an English test that is similar to TOEFL, namely USEPT (Universitas Sriwijaya English Proficiency Test). The objective of this study was to investigate the strategies applied by the students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University in answering the listening questions of USEPT. This study involved a mix-method design. Fifty-one students from semester 4,6,8 with listening scores above became participants in this study. Online questionnaire through Google Form and online interview through Zoom meetings were used by the researcher to collect the data. The data analysis result showed that strategy 'Before listening, I tried to anticipate the topic by looking at the answers on the screen' is the mostly used strategy, and strategy 'While listening to parts B and C, I tried to ignore the answers and just listen to the talks' is the least used strategy. In addition, paying attention to the similarities in multiple choice is one of the strategies that students use when facing a conversation/lecture that they do not understand at all.

***Keywords: USEPT, English Proficiency Test, Listening Strategies***

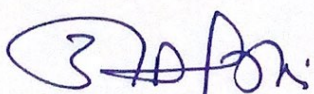
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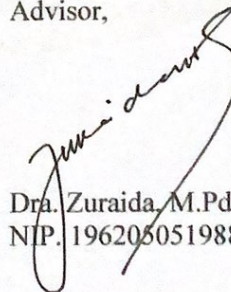
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background, the problem, the objective, and the significance of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

A test is a way to gauge someone's aptitude, understanding, or ability in a certain area (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2004). According to Tosuncuoglu (2018), as a way to gauge the progress of learning, tests, examinations, and evaluation models are crucial instruments. Therefore, the purpose of a test is to measure an individual's ability, knowledge, or performance (Hendriani, 2020).

A language test is required to evaluate a person's language proficiency and comprehension. There are several kinds of tests to measure students' ability level in English. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), IELTS (International English Language Testing Service), and most recently, iTEP (International Test of English Proficiency) are several the name of the international English proficiency test which is widely known in Indonesia (Sunardi, 2012). In Indonesia, English test scores are an administrative requirement for applying for scholarships, especially foreign ones. *Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan* (LPDP) or Education Fund Management Institute is one of the scholarship organizing institutions in Indonesia that requires the applicants to attach the results of their English language tests. Test organizers recognized by LPDP are ETS (Educational Testing Service), PTE Academic (Pearson Test English Academic), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), Duolingo English Test, or TOEP (Test of English Proficiency).

An English test is also required by some universities in Indonesia as a graduation requirement, for example, at Sriwijaya University. Sriwijaya University has its own English test that is similar to TOEFL, namely USEPT (Universitas Sriwijaya English Proficiency Test) or previously known as SULIET (Sriwijaya University Language Institute English Test). As explained in Sriwijaya University Academic and Student Manual (Sriwijaya University, 2021, p. 38), Sriwijaya University students are required to take USEPT and have to achieve the required scores. This test is mandatory for all students, including English Education Study Program students and the required score of USEPT for the English Education Study Program students is 500 (Sriwijaya, 2021).

USEPT consists of 3 parts, namely 1) Listening Comprehension, 2) Reading Comprehension, and 3) Structure. USEPT begins with Listening Comprehension which consists of Parts A, B, and C. Next, it continues with Reading Comprehension, and the last section is Structure. Majority of students do have challenges with the English test, which caused them to score below the average (Alek et al., 2019). The same thing happened with USEPT in which students have to do the test more than once to meet the passing grade score. As reported by Syafitri (2020), the majority of the English Education Study Program students did the USEPT more than twice in order to meet the required passing grade. This fact shows that it is challenging to pass the USEPT score even for English Education Study Program students.

The striking difference between English and Indonesian is certainly a challenge for improving listening skills. The difference in standards between Indonesian and English makes a contrast between the two languages. In fact, there are several things that underlie the contrast, such as the variety of differences in prefixes and suffixes, pronunciation with what is written, verb forms according to the time used, the flexibility of vocabulary that has different meanings in different events, the number of particles, differences in person pointers, and tenses that significantly up to 16 forms. In addition, English is full of idioms and unfamiliar topics due to cultural and

knowledge differences between the two languages which sometimes make students unable to relate to the topic being discussed.

In some cases, the listening section is the most difficult part for test takers. As reported in Syafitri's research (2022), although the majority of students answered that reading was the most difficult part of the USEPT, there were participants who stated Listening was the most difficult part of the USEPT. The study conducted by Jaya et al. (2021) also reported that there were participants who were undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program who had difficulty answering the Listening section. Specifically, none of the students scored well out of 67 samples, and 30% of them fell into the moderate listening classification and 70% fell into the poor listening classification. This shows that the problem of listening ability is serious and needs to be addressed. The factors that students often experience when answering questions on the listening test are the length and speed (Rina & Tiarina, 2021). This is relevant to what Bloomfield et al. (2010) state that words can be spoken very differently from how they look on paper, and the words used can also have an impact. Therefore, high concentration and focus are important in answering listening questions.

Agustiana's research (2019) found that students tend to have high levels of anxiety when taking listening exams. Izzah & Keeya (2019) found that listening anxiety includes distortion, lexis recognition, phonological awareness, and reading complexity. Problems such as native speaker speaking speed, pronunciation, limited vocabulary, difficulty concentrating, and problems interpreting the speaker's message are also experienced by high school students and students at the university level (Kaharuddin, 2017).

In overcoming difficulties in the listening section, strategies are needed to answer questions correctly. Research also shows that good listeners are listeners who use various strategies (O'Malley et al., 1989). This means that strategy plays a very important role in achieving the desired target, including strategies for answering



USEPT questions. In a book entitled *Tips & Tricks to Boost TOEFL Score: Minimum Target 550* by Estiwi Retno Purnaning et al. (2012) states that to answer listening comprehension questions well, you are required to have the ability to:

- (1) understand emphasis and tone,
- (2) understand the difference in sound,
- (3) understand idioms,
- (4) understand conversational expressions,
- (5) understand verb groups or phrases,
- (6) finding information that is implied (not clearly stated),
- (7) understanding comparisons, and
- (8) understanding the meaning/content of a conversation or talk.

In addition to the book, one of the most famous TOEFL preparation books and most often used by people, especially people who make English a foreign language is the Longman book by Phillips (2001). Taking from the author's experience as an English student at Sriwijaya University, in the listening course one of the books used in learning is The Longman book by Phillips (2001). The Longman book is offered with two editions: The Introductory book for beginners and the Preparation book for more advanced exam takers. This book presents strategies in answering TOEFL questions including strategies in answering listening section questions. The Longman book has also been widely used by researchers for their research such as in the research of Silviyanti et al. (2020) with the title "EFL Students' Strategies in Answering the Listening Section of the Longman TOEFL".

Research on strategies for answering USEPT questions had previously been carried out by Aullya (2022), but the focus was on strategies the students applied in answering the reading section of USEPT. Therefore, this present study attempts to fill the gap in research on strategies for answering USEPT questions by investigating the strategies that the students of the Sriwijaya University English Education Study Program applied in answering the listening questions of USEPT.

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

From the background described above, the problem of this study is formulated into the following research question: *What strategies are applied by the students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University in answering the listening questions of USEPT?*

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to find out *the strategies that are applied by the students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University in answering the listening questions of USEPT.*

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The obligation to pass a minimum score of USEPT is a graduation requirement at Sriwijaya University. USEPT is a test that is not easy even for English Education Study Program students because many students have to take it more than once in order to pass the test. The strategy in answering the listening section at USEPT is important so that it can help students to answer and understand questions well. Therefore, this study involved students who had done USEPT and scored above average in the listening section so that the results of this study are expected to explain the strategies applied by students who got scores above the average and become a reference for other students in doing the USEPT listening section.

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