

**INVESTIGATING THE CHALLENGES IN LISTENING SKILL FACED  
BY THE FIFTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION  
STUDY PROGRAM OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY  
PALEMBANG**

**A Thesis by**

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**Student Number 06011281520084**

**English Education Study Program**

**Language and Arts Education Department**



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

**2020**

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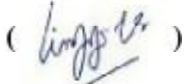
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## **DECLARATION OF PLAGIARISM**

I, the undersigned,

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Certify that thesis entitled “Investigating the Challenges in Listening Skill Faced by the Fifth Semester Students of English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Palembang” is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face the court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 2020

The undersigned,



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## **DEDICATION AND MOTTOS**

**This thesis is dedicated to :**

**My lovely mother and my father**

## **MOTTOS**

***“In whatever process you are in, you may lose everything in the end but for what it’s worth, you should never lose yourself.”***

***-Tony Gaskins-***

***“To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.”***

***- Friedrich Nietzsche-***

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Finally, I hope this thesis will be beneficial for the future researchers and the readers. However, I do realize that this work is far from perfect. Therefore, any suggestions for the improvement of this thesis are highly appreciated.

Palembang, July 2020

The writer,



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**ABSTRACT**

In the process of learning English particularly in listening, many students will encounter many challenges. These challenges will heavily affect the students' performance during the progress and may result with poor outcomes from the students. Some challenges were addressed in this study, with the aims of them were to find out ; (1) the challenges in listening faced by the students of Muhammadiyah University Palembang, (2) the most dominant challenge in listening faced by the students of Muhammadiyah University Palembang, (3) the students' perspective on listening subject in Muhammadiyah University Palembang. This research used a descriptive method. The population of this study was the students of English Education Study Program in Muhammadiyah University Palembang. The total number of the population was 48. There were 48 students selected purposively. Thirty six questions of listening comprehension test and sixty one items of questionnaires were administered to the samples. The data obtained from the test were analyzed statistically and the percentage analysis were used. Furthermore the data were used as the answers for the three main questions in this research. The results showed that (1) the fifth semester students of English Education of Muhammadiyah University faced various kinds of listening challenges, such as; enhancing listening skills, understanding the content of the listening text, comprehending linguistic features, getting failure to concentrate, learners' perceptions related to psychological characteristics, listening problems related to listener, listening problems related to the speaker, listening problems related to the physical setting, (2) the most dominant challenge was the students' perception of the listening problem related to the psychological characteristics, (3) The student's perspective towards listening subject was fairly good, in a way that they were confident with their own ability in it.

**Keyword:** *Investigating, Listening challenges*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents (1) background of the study, (2) problems of the study, (3) objectives of the study, and (4) significance of the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

There is no doubt that the role of a language in terms of communication and education has a huge impact. In this era of education, the requirement of languages which many countries use as the international language in order to further develop the education or just simply to make communication easier between people in different part of the world is essential. One of the most commonly used language in communication is English. In fact, English language has become an important field of study in the education systems in many countries. As an important international language, English has covered many areas such as politics, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, science and technology, education, the media, information technology, and popular culture, (Lauder, 2008).

In Indonesia, the government has included English as a compulsory subject for both junior and senior high school students. English is also included in the final examination in junior and senior high school, as officially stated in the Ministry of Education Decree No. 5/2015. Therefore, the importance of mastering of foreign languages, especially English as one of the introductions to the success of one's academic field in order to support the career in the world of work is crucial, Sinaga (2010, cited in Dian ,2019).

In English language, there are important skills that are connected to each other, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is also stated in the curriculum of 2013 as Indonesia's guidelines for the teacher. One of them, specifically, the listening skill, can be crucial in learning English. In a way, listening is one of the activity which gives the largest contribution in our live. Ever since we were born, the first ever communication we had is through listening to the words spoken from our parents. As we get to understand spoken language, it is easier to

receive new knowledge and to improve other skills. However, listening is not as easy as it looks like for the students.

In many cases in the language classroom where foreign language is taught, listening is difficult for the students because they need more attention, more understanding and concentration to comprehend the materials that included understanding the dialogue and the monologue of the text. Lewis (in Dhamarullah 2015) describes listening as a complex process that involves the process of hearing, identifying, understanding, and interpreting spoken language.

Generally, listening is mostly mistaken as a passive process and do not take that much of efforts in it. However, according to Mendelsohn (1998) listening plays an important role in communication as it is said that out of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%, speaking 25-30%, reading 11-16% and writing about 9%. Gebhard (2000) states that listening is not a passive skill but an active one because we need to be receptive to others, which include paying attention to explanations, questions, and opinions. Similarly, an article which appeared on the web page of Growing Greatness (Lawson, 2007) indicates that listening is the fundamental language skill, and it is the medium through which people gain a large portion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, their sense of values, and their appreciation. Furthermore, Rost (2009) adds that listening is an active and important mental ability in which it aids us to understand the world around us and is one of the necessary elements in creating successful communication.

Although listening has such significant roles in communication and second language acquisition, it has long been the neglected skill in research, teaching, and classroom assessment (Osada, 2004). Krashen (1995) further argues that people acquire language by understanding the linguistic information they hear. Thus, it can be concluded that listening is an active process that influences the students' understanding and linguistic aspect development, and even so it is not as easy as it seems.

When learning listening skill, especially for the EFL learners, there are challenges which make them struggle during the learning process. Underwood

(1989), says that these challenges could be caused by many things such as the background of the students, the facilities, unfamiliar words, lack of understanding, the student's perception problem with the listening test, failure to concentrate, and physical setting. According to Goh (1998), factors that influence listening comprehension have been discussed by many authors in the fields of both first and second language listening. Hasan (2000) states that the difficulty faced by many students who study English as a foreign language is the lack of understanding of English pronunciation expressed at normal speed through listening material.

In listening comprehension, there are challenges that affect the students in learning process. Buck (2001) identifies numerous challenges which can be confronted in listening tasks such as unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate, and unfamiliar accents. A considerable number of challenges learners face in listening comprehension are discussed in a literature work of Underwood (1989). Furthermore, Underwood (1989) organizes the major listening challenges as follows: (1) lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak, (2) not being able to get things repeated, (3) the listener's limited vocabulary, (4) failure to recognize the "signals," (5) problems of interpretation, (6) inability to concentrate, and (7) established learning habits.

Underwood (1989) also sees these as being related to learners' different backgrounds, such as their culture and education. She points out that students whose culture and education includes a strong storytelling and oral communication tradition are generally "better" at listening comprehension than those from a reading and book-based cultural and educational background. Boyle (1984) classifies the factors that impact EFL listening comprehension in three ways based on a survey of China teachers and students: the first is speaker factors such as; the linguistic ability of the speaker, the quality of the speech signal, and the personality of the speaker; the second is factors in the oral text such as; the complexity of the lexis and syntax, and the degree of cohesion; and the third one is listener factors, such as intelligence, memory, gender, motivation and background knowledge. Goh (1998) in Hamouda (2013) argues that listening challenges are all the internal and external characteristics that interrupt the understanding process directly related to cognitive

procedures at various stages of listening comprehension. It can be stated that listening difficulties are the characteristic disturbing the listener in comprehending the information. Furthermore in Hamouda (2013), it is found that the students encounter various kinds of listening challenges in learning comprehension such as unfamiliar words, the length of the spoken text, speed rate, a variety of accents, lack of concentration and pronunciation.

The problems mentioned in above discussion and findings explained why students encountered challenges that make them struggles in learning listening skill. In a matter of perception, or when the students try to perceive the meaning of the words they hear, they would likely to have almost many errors in their listening test. This activity, according to Underwood (1989) is an activity of paying attention and trying to get meaning from something we hear, and it is usually happens when EFL learners study listening skill.

From the above explanation, listening skill has challenges that generally affects the learners such as poor sound system, unfamiliar words, limited vocabulary, problems of interpretation, and many more. These factors really play a huge impact on the end result of the students' score on listening test. As in Indonesia, the score of English in our country according to the data by EF EPI in 2018 is ranked 51st from 88 countries in the world. The score was 51.58 and it was relatively low. Even though English is an important subject to be taught in schools, starting from basic level like the elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and even up to the college level. Specifically in many universities in Indonesia, many students struggles in English, even for the students who major in English program. One of the cases was investigated in Islamic University of Riau, in a research conducted by Sitti Hadijah and Shalawati entitled "A Study on Listening Skills and Perspectives to First Year Students at English Department of Academic Year 2015/2016". The result showed that the students still faced challenges in listening activities due to their problems in completing basic listening comprehension test in note taking activities about vocabulary in context (36%), numbers (29%), and words spelling (35%).

Based on the problems and the discussions above related to listening skill problems, the writer decided to conduct a research which focuses on the challenges that affects listening as organized by Underwood (1989). The major listening challenges are : (1) lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak, (2) not being able to get things repeated, (3) the listener's limited vocabulary, (4) failure to recognize the signals, (5) problems of interpretation, (6) inability to concentrate, and (7) established learning habits. Hence, the research is entitled "Investigating the Challenges in Listening Skill Faced by the Fifth Semester Students of English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah University Palembang".

### **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

The problems of this study were formulated in the following questions :

1. What were the challenges in listening faced by the students of Muhammadiyah University Palembang?
2. What was the most dominant cause of challenges in listening faced by the students of Muhammadiyah University Palembang?
3. What were the students' perspective on listening in Muhammadiyah University Palembang?

### **1.3 The Objective of the Study**

1. The objective of this study was to find out the challenges in listening faced by the students in listening skill subject in Muhammadiyah University Palembang.
2. The objective of this study was to find out the most dominant cause of challenges in listening faced by the students of Muhammadiyah University Palembang.
3. The objective of this study was to find out the students' perspective on listening in Muhammadiyah University Palembang.

### **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

Hopefully, this study can be a beneficial research for many people to gain more information related with the challenges faced by the students in listening skill. The writer also hope that this study can provide other teachers or researchers with

important information regarding with the problems faced by the students in listening skill. Furthermore, this study is expected to give important information that can be useful as references for the next researchers to come.

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