Extensive Listening Challenges through the Lens of the East Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract. The benefits of extensive listening have been documented in several studies, particularly in English as a Foreign Language(EFL) listening. These studies constructed the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for its implementation, including the typical materials students can utilize to organize extensive listening practices. In light of this, this paper presents a briefoverview of the listening materials used by the students in this setting and the challenges they faced in utilizing them for extensive listening practices. This qualitative study was designed as a survey involving 79 students from a private university in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. In collecting the data, the researchers administered an unstructured questionnaire combining close-ended and open-ended questions providing chances for the respondents to answer the questions in their own words. The result of this study confirmed that extensive listening is challenging to practice. In this case, students need knowledge about the pedagogy of extensive listening practices results in inappropriate material selections. This study recommends teachers' involvement in assisting the material selection that meets the student's pace to help students achieve more definite outcomes of the extensive listening practices.

Keywords: Extensive listening; EFL; challenges; listening materials

INTRODUCTION

Studies on the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening comprehension skills in the Indonesian context reported that listening difficulty experienced by the EFL students was also resourced from the inappropriateness of the listening materials exposed to the students (Izzah & Keeya, 2019; Putera, et.al, (2021); Ramadhianti & Somba, 2021). These studies remarked that students might be exposed to lengthy, complex, and challenging spoken texts beyondtheir levels of practicing listening. In light of this, Ramadhianti & Somba (2021) & Cahyono & Widiati (2009) argued that students' inability to comprehend the listening texts mainly resourced from their need for background knowledge about the meaning and the forms of the target language.This study also remarked that other factors contributing to this challenge are resourced from their inability to distinguish the lexical and phonetic forms of the target language.

In response to this challenge, many scholars in this area proposed Extensive Listening (EL) as a practical instruction expected to overcome the listening difficulties among EFL learners. Waring (2008) argued that pedagogically, extensive listening adapted the framework of first language acquisition in which the learners' levels of comprehension are developed in stages following the individual language acquisition process. He highlighted that the more exposure to the target language, the more experienced the students are. In light of this, Chang (2011) stated that extensive listening is typically defined as a listening approach which primarily aimed at providing students with more types of listening materials and more flexible listening opportunities based on their levels and interest. This idea significantly impacted listening experiences designed in intensive listening classrooms concerned with understanding the precise sounds, words, and phrases, as well as grammatical and pragmatic units rather than the meaning itself.

Studies in this area have reported view studies regarding the effectiveness of different kinds of listening resources students can use in practicing extensive listening, includingthe use of grade audiobooks (Chang & Millet, 2016;), English podcasts (Alm, 2013), News reports (Adnan, 2013), TED Talks (Astika & Kurniawan, 2019; Setyowati & Kuswahono, 2018), Mobile phones (Reinders & Cho, 201), or Students-Tube (Saputra & Fatimah, 2018). However, studies about the students' challenges in utilizing this variety of listening resources must be extended. Therefore, the researchers were interested in investigating the students' viewpoints and experiences toward the listening resources utilized in their extensive listening practices. The findings of this study are supposed to enrich the under-research issues of extensive listening and extend the pedagogical implication toward the practices of extensive listening in EFL settings.

METHOD

This qualitative study aimed to describe the students' views regarding the challenges of extensive listening. In collecting the data, the researchers surveyed 79 EFL students from a private university in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The samples were determined purposefully, considering their experiences in practicing extensive listening in this setting. The data were collected through a survey using the unstructured questionnaires of close-ended and open-ended questions. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistic stages concerning the frequency distribution of the data occur.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Waring (2008) argued that exposing students to rich and broad listening materials will help students in extending their background knowledge toward the forms and meaning of English result to the improvement of their ability to comprehend the English spoken texts. Therefore, EFL teachers are suggested to allow their students to extend their listening practices beyond the classroom listening practices through extensive listening. This section presented the findings of the study, comprising the overview of the extensive listening practices under this setting that primarily concern on describing the kinds of listening material and the students' challenges in utilizing them for individual extensive listening practices.

The Overview of Students' Preferences in Material Selection

Pedagogically, extensive listening is aimed at engaging students with various listening materials based on their interests. Ivone & Renandya (2019) highlighted that one of the benefits of extensive listening is to give freedom for students the to determine the materials, topics, time, place, and strategies to practice listening. Having students work with enjoyable listening practices is supposed to raise their motivation to learn to listen in the target language. Extending the kinds of materials beyond the short or long monologues or conversations designed for extensive listening is expected to provide students with broader opportunities for a more authentic environment where the target language is used (Renandya & Farell, 2011).

In this study, it was found that students utilized a variety of listening materials in practicing extensive listening. It was indicated that compared to offline materials, most students preferred exploring online materials to support their extensive listening practices, including materials available on online platforms such as YouTube, TED Talks, BBC Learning English, Story Nory, and other listening online platforms. They determined the topics based on their interest. Most students were interested in listening to topics that deal with AI and digital technology, sports, education, or easy topics like travel stories. Another fact found in this study was that most students preferred practicing extensive listening using audio-visual materials instead of audio ones, as presented in Chart 1.
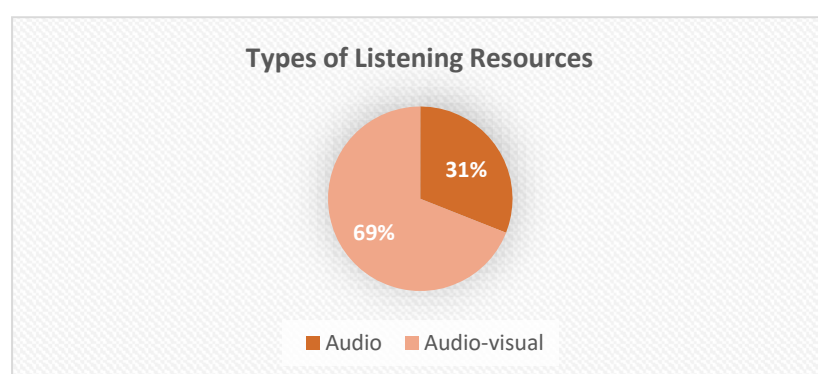
Figure 1. Types of Extensive Listening Materials

The result of the data analysis indicated that most students preferred doing extensive listening using audio-visual materials such as YouTube, TED Talks, or short movies instead of audio ones, such as podcasts or audiobooks. The researchers assumed that podcasts and audiobooks were rarely used among the students. It was also revealed that TED Talks and YouTube videos are the most frequent materials utilized by the students because it helps them improve their motivation and focus in listening. In line with this, Cahyana (2020) remarked that watching

audio-visual programs, such as short movies/series, helps students improve listening and speaking skills. Moreover, it helps students to enhance their background knowledge of English, vocabulary, or word recognition

Students Challenges in Utilizing the Listening Materials

This finding reflected that having students determine the listening resources themselves leaves another problematic matter among the students. The students reported difficulties comprehending the spoken texts presented in the audio-visual materials for two main reasons,

including the complexity of the language structure and unfamiliar vocabulary uttered by the speakers. However, they had less difficulty recognizing the words because they tended to use the reading (the subtitles) while listening activities, improving their ability to recognize the words used. They also used the speed control system in the videos, which enabled them to increase or reduce the speed based on their needs. This finding confirms other benefits of using audio-visual videos on online platforms, such as YouTube or TED Talks (Antle, 2011; Almurashi, 2016; Bidabadi & Yamat, H. (2014)
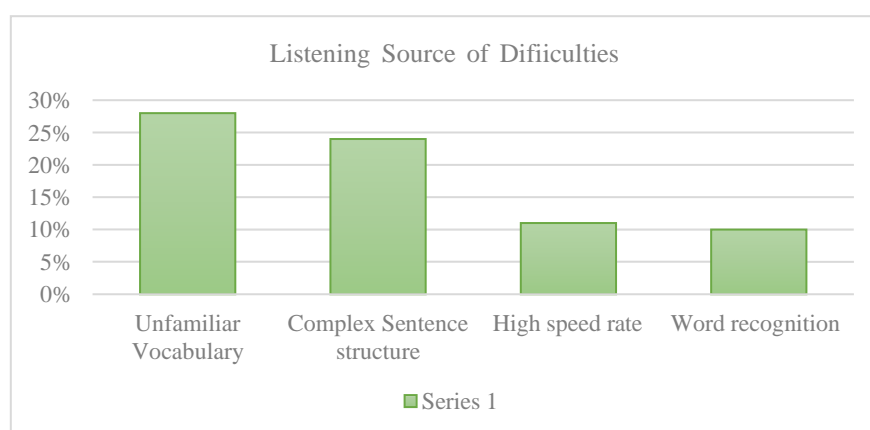
Figure 2. Sources of Difficulties among the Extensive Listening Materials

The researchers assumed that this challenge arose from the students' lack of awareness toward individual levels of proficiency in determining the topics and kinds of materials to use. In this case, the students under this setting were assumed

being trapped on the idea of 'freely select the material' without considering their individual English proficiency, therefore, about 66% of the students' tend to select and listen to the materials that are upper their levels as presented in chart 3.
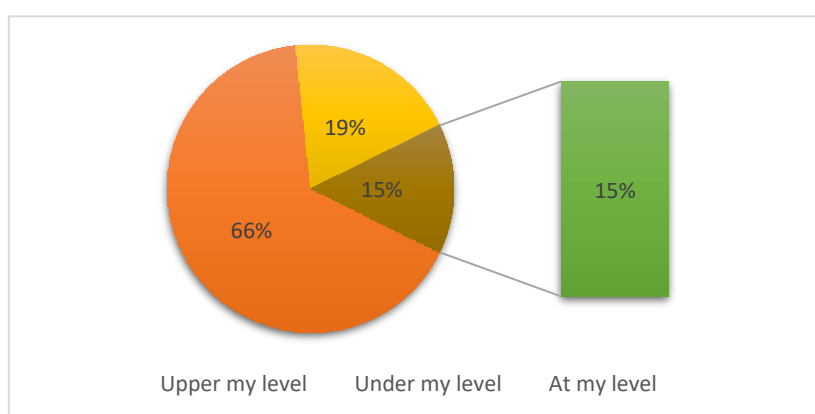
Another finding of this research revealed that the aspects such as length and unfamiliar topics contribute to the students' challenges in comprehending the listening materials. It was found that most students tend to listen to more than 15 minutes length materials with more than

50% unfamiliar vocabulary. The researchers agreed that teachers must equip students with an appropriate pedagogical understanding of the practices of extensive listening in order to help them determine what and how they have to practice impactful extensive listening.

The researchers agreed that the focus of extensive listening is to provide students with a widerange of comprehensible inputs from various materials. However, it was found that this goal can be achieved when extensive listening is organized in a more structured and systematic instruction instead of just assigning the students to listen more. The challenges explored in the previous section confirmed the students' lack of knowledge of the theory & pedagogy of extensive listening, resulting in inappropriate practices of extensive listening. Therefore, teachers' involvement is needed mainly to assist the students in planning and setting the goals of their extensive listening practices, including in planning the topics and materials to listen to and determining the target outcomes of their extensive listening practices.

CONCLUSION

This paper presented the challenges experienced by EFL students and confirmed that the use of inappropriate listening materials results in the ineffectiveness of extensive listening practices. Thus, there is a need for teachers' assistance to help the students achieve the benefits of extensive listening through the materials explored in their extensive listening practices. Appropriate materials are supposed to help the students extend their background knowledge about vocabulary, expressions, Idioms, and spoken English phrases. Besides, appropriate listening materials should support the students in learning to comprehend the texts within various intonations, stress, rhythms, gestures, or pitch ranges of spoken discourse, improving their listening comprehension skills.

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