

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH* STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to know the implementation of Diagnostic Approach strategy to improve the students' listening skill. This study is part of a car action research and carried out by using descriptive research method in order to describe the implementation of the Diagnostic Approach strategy. This study revealed interesting results. Not only the students can improve their listening score as shown by their higher post test score but they are also motivated to use various strategies to get the information needed in their listening activities.

Keywords: diagnostic approach, listening skill

As every English Language learners knows, there are four skills in language, i.e., speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Listening as one of the four skills of language has been considered as a passive skill compared with the other three skills. These three skills, speaking, reading, and writing, are often even most of the times considered as more important skills to be learned first. So, teachers always emphasize the importance of studying them and develop strategies, activities, and instructions to assist their students to master these three skills. On the contrary, since listening most of the times is considered as a passive skill, teachers would likely think that their students would be able to master this skill without assistance. Listening, as Howatt and Dakin (1974) define, is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and grasping his meaning. Therefore, most of lecturers of English simply presume that as long as the students keep practicing independently to listen to the target language then eventually they will improve their listening skill.

Typically, lecturers just evaluate students' ability based on the correctness of their answers and proceed to the next activity. Therefore, result is the only focus of the listening subject because the output of listening activity is the form of correct answers. This listening activity merely tests the students, and notify them that they failed at certain points, but does little to teach them how to learn to listen, that is, to help them understand better what went wrong with their listening and how it could be fixed.

Moreover, in a typical listening activity, most of lecturers tend to rushly provide the correct answer for their students without trying to find out why they choose the wrong answer. Meanwhile, when the students have the correct answer, it is automatically presumed that they have good listening skill without trying to investigate why they choose the correct answer. The fact whether the correct answer is real from their understanding or simply based on the lucky guess is hardly ever followed up. Therefore, lecturers who teach Listening Subject has important role to determine a strategy to help their students to overcome the common problems found when they study the Listening Subject.

Field (2008) calls for a *Diagnostic Approach* to listening, which allows lecturers and students to attend to listening difficulties and practice strategies to diminish them. Just like its name, diagnostic approach diagnoses the students' answer.

English Department at Sriwijaya Polytechnic has Listening subject as one of the main subjects in the curriculum. The listening subject is taught in the first four semesters. Listening 1 Subject is taught in the first semester, Listening 2 Subject is taught in the second semester, Listening 3 Subject is taught in the third semester, and finally Listening 4 Subject is taught in

the fourth semester. The research was conducted in the odd semester 2017/2018 academic year, where Listening 3 Subject was taught. Since the subject was Listening 3, therefore automatically it was considered that all of semester 3 students in that class had already got ample knowledge about listening skills and sufficient knowledge about listening strategies. Surprisingly, It turned out that all of them were failed to get good score in their pre-test given in the very first meeting. Therefore, it was considered important to find out why this could be happened and what kind of method or teaching strategy should be used so the students would be better in terms of their listening skills and could use their listening skills well when they become semester four students and have Listening 4 subject in that semester.

Thus, in order to help students get improved with their listening skill, it is needed to find out their listening problems which cause difficulties to them. According to Yagang (1994), the problems in listening were accompanied with the four following factors: the message, the speaker, the listener and the physical setting. Furthermore, a numbers of research have been carried out to pick out the problem in listening. The problems were believed to cause by the speech rate, vocabulary and pronunciation (Higgins, 1995).

As Flowerdew & Miller (1996) assumed that the problems of the students were for the speed of delivery, new terminology and concept, difficulty in focusing and the physical environment. It is hard for the students to understand proper names as they have never heard about it before. In other words, they have no background knowledge about what they are listening. The other problems are the unfamiliar, uninteresting and too long listening which makes the students feel strange, discouraged and bored of what they are hearing and also the sound connections and intonation spoken by native speakers with different accents.

Listening plays an important role in second language instruction for several reasons (Rost, 2005). If it is difficult to hear it well, the listener will find it hard to response or perhaps the listener will likely fail to pass his listening examination for instance. In fact, students often take the wrong way when listening and this leads them to the poor result. It should be noted that the learner's perception of their listening problem and strategies can affect their comprehension both positively and negatively (Wenden, 1986).

RESEARCH METHOD

In the other hand, even though sometimes a method has been used, eventually the lecturer of English still needs to modify or totally change his/her method which is considered necessarily done based on the students' learning process by observing their behavior.

In a research, this kind of activity is called classroom action research, where the researchers also used classroom action research to conduct their research focused on the implementation of Diagnostic Approach. According to Chamot, et. al. (1998), action research is a classroom-based research conducted by teachers in order to reflect upon and evolve their teaching.

Based on that, it was decided that a Class Action Research (CAR) would be conducted. Classroom action research (CAR) is systematic inquiry with the goal of informing practice in particular situation (Angelo and Cross, 1993, p.1). It means that classroom action research is one of the way for teachers or lecturers to find out what works best in their own classroom situation, thus allowing informed decision about teaching.

Furthermore, Corey (1953, p.1) defined action research as the process through which practitioners study their own practice to solve their personal practical problems. It means that action research is a collaborative activity where practitioners work together to help one another design and carry out investigation in their classrooms. In addition, Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (1982, p.3) stated that action research is deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is characterized by spiraling cycles of

problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, data-driven action taken, and finally problem redefinition.

Diagnostic Approach was the listening strategy chosen in this one cycle class action research. The main concern of the research is: How to teach Listening Subject by using *Diagnostic Approach*?

Listening is important in our daily lives because listening plays a vital role. People listen for different aims such as listen to entertainment, academic, business or to gain necessary information. As for foreign language learning, listening is of paramount important since it provides the language input (Rost 1994, pp.141-142). Without understanding input appropriately, learning simply cannot get any improvement. In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved (Cross, 1998). Therefore, Diagnostic Approach was chosen. Just like a doctor diagnoses his patient by examining and asking thorough questions to his patient, Diagnostic Approach diagnoses students' wrong answers by finding it out through questions, throwing class discussion to get variety of learning strategies and use various listening strategies to improve the listening skills.

Field (1998, pp.111-112) states that a *Diagnostic Approach* is an approach which is used to employ listening by following up on how answers were reached so teachers can identify where comprehension broke down and focus on these areas for further instruction.

According to Underwood (1989), characteristics of the *Diagnostic Approach* are described as the following:

- a. Using Incorrect Answers to Detect Weaknesses, and Designing Activities to Help
- b. Avoiding Listening Tasks That Require Memorization
- c. Helping Students Develop a Wider Range of Listening Strategie
- d. Differentiating Between Listening Skills
- e. Providing Top-Down and Bottom-Up Listening Practice

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of the *Diagnostic Approach* Strategy

Based on the investigation to identify the problem, most students only rely on a single strategy such as focusing on individual sentences, without changing or adapting it.

To cope with difficult texts more effectively, students were exposed to a variety of strategies like: Explaining, modeling, and regularly practicing with students how to set goals, plan tasks, selfmonitor, and evaluate their listening. Other strategies such as anticipating content, inferring, guessing, and recognizing redundancies were also considered to improve specific listening problems. Lecturer is also encouraging interaction with classmates through listening expands communicative contexts and enhances self-confidence. Taking note while listening suggested by the lecturer was considered as the most useful strategy by the students.

In order to implement the *Diagnostic Approach* Strategy characterized by Underwood (1989), the researchers revised the conventional lesson format adopted by many teachers and the course book use for the lesson. A revised lesson model featured extra practices intentionally created for the students to practice the Top-Down and Bottom-Up Listening Practice. The exercises fulfill three different purposes: equipping learners with the subskills that a competent native listener could be expected to possess; familiarizing learners with the features of natural conversational speech; and training learners in some smaller-scale strategy techniques.

Before the students began the listening activity, they were told about how many items they would find in the exercise, or the duration of the tape script, so that they would be then mentally prepare themselves for the content to follow. This kind of information helps focus minds and prevents a lesson from drifting. The instructional language recommended is

always couched in a positive and encouraging way and provide a style that steers clear of being unduly judgmental. Students are therefore encouraged to help each other, and activities are to be treated as opportunities to learn and practise rather than as ways to test and evaluate performance. This again seems like good psychology: far better to tell students what they can do, and how this may be extended or improved upon, than focus on what they cannot. The while-listening stage of the lesson is concerned with activities that students perform to maintain their interest in the midst of the listening task itself. These should be simple, do-able tasks such as ticking, circling, marking, ordering, drawing, labeling, selecting, form-filling, making a list, spotting mistakes, table-completing or predicting (Bedwell: 2014).

The Top-Down and Bottom-Up Listening Practice were provided by creating them since the coursebook used does not provide a such complete task for practicing the Top-Down and Bottom-Up Listening Practice.

Top-down listening skills include:

- listening for gist, main ideas, topic, and setting of the text
- listening for specific information
- sequencing the information
- prediction
- guessing
- inferencing

Bottom-up processing listening skills include:

- distinguish individual sounds, word boundaries, and stressed syllables
- identify thought groups
- listen for intonation patterns in utterances
- identify grammatical forms and functions
- recognize contractions and connected speech
- recognize linking words

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Listening Score

No.	Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Score Progress
1.	Student 1	45	82	Increased
2	Student 2	40	81	Increased
3	Student 3	39	61	Increased
4	Student4	42	84	Increased
5	Student 5	20	59	Increased
6	Student 6	25	53	Increased
7	Student 7	30	65	Increased
8	Student 8	34	68	Increased
9	Student 9	54	90	Increased
10	Student 10	40	66	Increased
11	Student 11	41	73	Increased
12	Student 12	39	74	Increased
13	Student 13	34	68	Increased
14	Student 14	45	87	Increased
15	Student 15	35	79	Increased
16	Student 16	45	84	Increased
17	Student 17	0	43	Increased
18	Student 18	50	65	Increased
19	Student 19	56	71	Increased
20	Student 20	25	56	Increased
21	Student 21	53	82	Increased

22	Student 22	45	67	Increased
23	Student 23	43	71	Increased

Based on the pre test and post test listening score above, it was obvious that since the diagnostic approach was implemented, the students had improved their listening skills which could be seen from their increasing score. In the class discussion, the students also reported that they became more confident since they had increased their listening strategies.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results, it was concluded that Diagnostic Approach was an appropriate strategy in teaching listening. By using Diagnostic Approach, students' are able to find out their weaknesses in listening and can improve their listening skills by implementing many listening strategies.

SUGGESSTION

This research has suggested that, in current practice, we focus too much on the product of listening and too little on the process. The solution it proposes features various types of micro-listening exercise, which can be employed prognostically as part of listening training or diagnostically, in response to evidence of breakdowns of understanding. Since the research was still conducted by using class action research, it is suggested to have a follow up research by using experiment research to enrich the evidence of the use of this approach.

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