

ANXIETY OVER TOEFL LISTENING COMPREHENSION AMONG EIGHT-SEMESTER STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study was done to find out how anxious students were about the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL test. Since the TOEFL test's component on listening comprehension is frequently regarded as the most challenging. Lack of understanding could result in anxiety, which would lead to poor language skills and a poor grade. Students from the Islamic faculty at Muhammadiyah Aceh University who are eight-semester students participated in this study by taking the TOEFL exam at the university's language center using a random sample methodology. This study employs the descriptive method and is qualitative in nature. Both an interview and a questionnaire were used to gather the data. According to the survey's findings, the majority of students experience anxiety before taking the TOEFL's listening comprehension section. They become anxious and perplexed when they do not comprehend every word in the TOEFL listening comprehension portion because they do not understand the pronunciation of a native speaker who is not like them. They also become anxious when they cannot tie a topic or term to their prior knowledge. The interview led the author to the conclusion that students' challenges on the Listening Comprehension section of the TOEFL are due to their lack of preparation.

Keywords: Anxiety, TOEFL test, Listening comprehension section.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui seberapa cemasnya mahasiswa dalam mengikuti tes TOEFL khususnya pada bagian listening comprehension. Karena pada bagian listening comprehension sering dianggap sebagai tes yang paling menantang. Kurangnya pemahaman dapat mengakibatkan kecemasan yang akan menyebabkan keterampilan bahasa yang buruk dan nilai yang buruk. Mahasiswa dari Fakultas Agama Islam Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh yang merupakan mahasiswa semester delapan mengikuti penelitian ini dengan mengikuti ujian TOEFL di Pusat Bahasa universitas dengan pengambilan sampel secara random sampling. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dan bersifat kualitatif. Wawancara maupun kuesioner digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil penelitian adalah mayoritas mahasiswa mengalami kecemasan sebelum mengikuti tes listening. Mereka menjadi cemas dan bingung ketika mereka tidak memahami setiap kata dalam bagian listening comprehension, karena mereka tidak memahami pengucapan si penutur asli. Mereka juga menjadi cemas ketika mereka tidak dapat memahami topik atau istilah dengan pengetahuan mereka sebelumnya. Wawancara tersebut membawa penulis pada kesimpulan bahwa tantangan mahasiswa pada bagian listening comprehension dari TOEFL adalah karena kurangnya persiapan.

Kata Kunci: Kecemasan, Tes TOEFL, Listening Comprehension

A. INTRODUCTION

In order to develop graduates who can compete in the current globalization, Muhammadiyah Aceh University requires the TOEFL test for the thesis final examination. The minimal passing score for the TOEFL test is 475 for the English Department and 410 for other departments. According to the Writer's observations, the majority of students who took the TOEFL test suffer anxiety due to their low vocabulary, inability to focus, and the conversation's rapid pace.

Listening and speaking are frequently cited as the two most challenging skills that make people anxious. According to Gilakjani (2016), it is critical for pupils to develop their listening abilities because they are necessary for communication. Additionally students should learn languages to be able to understand the major points of what others are saying in order to communicate with them. The children can then gather information from the speaker, comprehend messages, and create their own words based on what they heard (Ahmadi, 2016).

It takes practice to become a skilled listener. There are various steps that the pupils must take. Tyagi (2013) asserts that listening involves five stages: listening, understanding, remembering, assessing, and responding. Every phase is an important process. Receiving noises is the first step in listening. Second, comprehension refers to knowing what the speaker means to say. The third step in remembering is memorization of the speaker's main topic. Fourth, evaluating entails assessing the speaker's subject. Finally, replying entails answering the query using the data you've learned from the speaker.

Underwood as cited in (Gilakjani, 2016) says that effective listening comprehension is hampered by a few factors. First off, speech pace cannot be controlled by listeners. The largest issue with listening comprehension is that speakers' speech rates are outside the control of listeners. Second, the inability of listeners to hear words repeated can be a major problem for them. A recording part cannot be replayed by students. It can be challenging for teachers to determine whether or not their students have absorbed what they have heard when they choose what and when to repeat listening texts. Third, listeners do not possess a strong vocabulary. Speakers may choose words that their listeners are unfamiliar with. Unfamiliar words might cause listeners to pause, consider their meaning for a time, and miss the next section of the speech.

Fourth, listeners might not be familiar with the context. Communication between listeners can be facilitated by shared understanding and well-known texts. Listeners can occasionally understand a passage's surface meaning, but unless they are familiar with it, they may have significant difficulty understanding the passage's full meaning. Fifth, it can be difficult for listeners to focus on the listening text. A little lapse in focus can occasionally make comprehension impossible. Concentration will be simple for listeners if the listening passage interests them.

One of the psychological characteristics with the most research is anxiety. The notion of anxiety encompasses a variety of overt behavioral traits that may be empirically examined as well as introspective feelings that are epistemologically inaccessible according to Casado & Dereshiwsky (cited in Serraj, 2013). A similar explanation is provided by Horwitz (1986), who claims that anxiety is a concoction of thoughts, feelings, and actions connected to the particulars of the process of learning a foreign language.

Xu emphasizes that anxiousness may be the emotional aspect that interferes with testing the most significantly. It is linked to unpleasant emotions including unease, annoyance, uncertainty in oneself, apprehension, and tension. Pappamihiel (2002) similarly states that anxiety in general can be associated with threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening. Additionally, self-efficacy is the conviction that one has the ability to achieve that result by successfully performing a certain action or activity associated with that competency. Fear of failure, test anxiety, communication anxiety, and threats to one's sense of self can all lower one's sense of self-efficacy in a situation like language testing and increase the likelihood that a second foreign language situation will be perceived as dangerous (Bandura as cited in Çubukçu, 2008).

There are different sorts of anxiety, and Pappamihiel divides them into three categories: situation-specific anxiety, trait anxiety, and state anxiety. A person with trait anxiety has a tendency to feel uncomfortable or worried no matter what environment they are exposed to. Indeed, such anxiousness is a permanent characteristic of a person and is therefore challenging, if not impossible, to overcome. An anxious person is likely to experience anxiety in a range of circumstances. It is believed that worry may interfere with language tests if it develops into a trait. State (situational) anxiety refers to the second category of anxiety. Because it only occurs in specific circumstances, as the

name suggests, this kind of worry is not long-lasting. It is anxiety or tension felt at a specific time in response to an external stimulus. It happens as a result of the learner's exposure to a certain stressful situation or incident. For instance, some students experience anxiety if they are asked to speak in front of the class by the teacher. Situation-specific anxiety is the third type of anxiety. People who experience situational anxiety may only see some situations as anxiety-producing when specific conditions are present. A student might not experience anxiety when writing a bad essay, for instance. However, the same student can experience greater levels of anxiety when asked to write an identical essay in English, a foreign language (Pappamihel 2002).

The capacity to recognize and comprehend what others are saying is known as listening. Brown and Yule (cited in Gilakjani, 2016) defined listening comprehension as the ability to comprehend what has been heard. He or she will comprehend the text if they learn it through hearing it. This procedure involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, their grammar and vocabulary and their understanding of meaning. These three actions can all be done at once by an adept listener. The inner voice one hears when writing must use the same abilities of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, editing, and generalizing as required by writing and reading (Howatt, cited in Turgunova 2020).

When learning a second language, according to Capan (2013) listening comprehension is also referred to as an invisible process and an active process in which the listener chooses and interprets data from auditory and visual signals in order to define what is happening and what the speakers are attempting to say. This is due to the fact that hearing is not visible; only its effects are visible, and because understanding requires active participation in order to comprehend and retain what has been heard. In other words, listening comprehension is a continuous process that involves both understanding the message that is being conveyed and then retaining it in long-term memory.

As Scarcella and Oxford (cited in Xu, 2011), students experience listening anxiety when they believe they are given a task that is too challenging or foreign to them. As they dealt with the obstacles to listening to the speaker, the listeners felt listening anxiety. Chainstan (1979) argues that since listening is such a difficult talent to master, listeners are concerned that they will misunderstand or misinterpret the

information. It is assumed that in order to understand an oral communication, the listener must be able to understand the speaker's entire message. Because of this, the students perceive the TOEFL listening comprehension component negatively. Additionally, Kim (in Dewi 2018) claims that students' anxiety and stress about English listening as well as their lack of confidence in the listening comprehension section are two elements that have an impact on their listening process. This obstacle may make it difficult for the students to comprehend the speaker's messages.

a. Students' anxiety and stress about English listening

Kim (cited in Dewi, 2018) claims that the condition associated with listening anxiety is stress and worry about English hearing. While listening to the speaker, the listener could experience anxiety. The problem is evident when pupils quickly forget what they have heard, fail to recognize words they are familiar with, comprehend the message but not the intended message, and fail to pay attention to the next step while pondering the meaning. Anxiety when listening refers to a more precise experience and situation where the anxiety occurred. As a result, when they are unable to listen well, the students get tense or apprehensive.

b. Lack of confidence in listening comprehension section

Kim (cited in Dewi, 2018) says that pupils who have failed listening exercises before may feel insecure. Students' recollections of listening exercises are negatively impacted by unfavorable encounters. When the kids listen to the speaker, it impacts them. Because of this, taking the TOEFL test created listening anxiety due to a lack of confidence and past listening failures.

In conclusion, listening anxiety in the TOELF Prediction test can be an issue due to tension and worry about English listening as well as a lack of confidence in the listening comprehension part.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used descriptive qualitative research and employed questionnaires and interviews for this study's instruments, but only where it was necessary to clarify information in the questionnaires. Because the evidence can be arbitrary and different, the researcher collects qualitative data. In addition, the response is regarded as legitimate because it is based on personal experience. The author of this

study examines students' anxiousness throughout the TOEFL test's listening comprehension section. Participants in this study are Muhammadiyah Aceh University students studying at Islamic faculty who took the TOEFL exam there at the university's Language Center. There are 15 students involved. The researcher utilized random sampling technique to determine the number of sample.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. *The Result of Questionnaire*

To obtain more accurate data, a questionnaire was created. The purpose of the study was to learn more about the students' test-day anxiety related to the listening comprehension component of the TOEFL. The author provided pupils with a questionnaire to complete. There were 20 questions on it. It was given out to the 15 students taking the TOEFL test at Muhammadiyah Aceh University's Language Center. The statistician utilized the straightforward formula. This statistical approach uses the frequency distribution.

Table 1. I Get Stuck with One or Two Unfamiliar Words

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	20,%
Agree	10	66,6%
Strongly Disagree	2	13,3%
Disagree	-	-
Total		100%

According to the table above, the listening comprehension component of the TOEFL test is where the majority of students get stopped because of one or two unfamiliar words. Only two pupils firmly oppose it. Thus, it may be inferred that the majority of students consider the new words to be a distraction.

Table 2. I Get Nervous if Listening Test Passages are Read just Once

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	13,4%
Agree	9	60%
Strongly Disagree	3	20%
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

The test passages in the TOEFL listening comprehension exam are only read once, and based on the facts above, it can be assumed that students who are

apprehensive about the passage are more likely to be nervous than those who are not. However, 20% strongly disagree and 6.6% of student's dispute that being required to read a lot of test texts make them anxious.

Table 3. It is Difficult to Understand People with English Pronunciation that is Different from Mine

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	1	6,6%
Agree	12	80%
Strongly Disagree	1	6,6%
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

According to the table above, more than half of students concur that it is challenging to understand persons who pronounce the English language differently. One student (6,6%) disagrees, whereas one student (6,6%) thinks it's easy to comprehend them. This finding indicates that pupils have trouble recognizing English pronunciation that is different from their own.

Table 4. I am Worried that I Might not be Able to Understand When People Talk too Fast

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	53,3%
Agree	6	40%
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

The information shown above demonstrates how speaking quickly affects listeners' comprehension. The majority of the sample in this study is concerned that they may not be able to comprehend when others speak too quickly. One pupil is the only one who disagrees with the statement.

Table 5. I am Nervous When I am not Familiar with the Topic

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	11	73,4%
Agree	3	20%
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

According to the table above, 73,4% of students strongly agree that they feel anxious when a new topic is presented during a listening test. With only 1 student disagreeing, it can be inferred that in order for pupils to feel comfortable, they must be conversant with the subject being discussed.

Table 6. It is Easy to Make Guesses about the Part I Missed

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	6	40%
Agree	5	33,3%
Strongly Disagree	2	13,3%
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

The table above demonstrates how students find it simple to infer what they missed in the listening section. 40% of them strongly agree, and 33.3% of them agree. Only 13,3% of people say they are uneasy about it, and 13,3 of them say they are very uneasy.

Table 7. I am Worried that I Might have Missed Important Information while I was Distracted

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	6	40%
Agree	8	53,3
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

While taking a test, concentration is crucial. The findings from the aforementioned data indicate those students' concerns about missing crucial knowledge while distracted. 40% of students strongly agree with the statement, making up 53,3% of the group. Almost none of them disagree.

Table 8. I am Worried When I Cannot See the Lips or Facial Expression of the Person

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	-	-
Agree	1	6,6%
Strongly Disagree	12	80%
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

According to the above table, it is clear that the majority of pupils are unconcerned when they cannot see the lips or expression of the person speaking to them. A small percentage of them, though, are concerned about it.

Table 9. I Feel Anxious When I Take TOEFL Test on Listening Comprehension Section.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	11	73,3%
Agree	2	13,3%
Strongly Disagree	1	6,6%
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

The majority of students, as shown in the table, experience anxiety and confusion when they do not comprehend every word during a listening test. 13,3% of students and more than half of them strongly agree with the assertion. The remaining pupils are made up of 6,6% strongly disagreeing and 6,6% disagreeing.

Table 10. It is Easy to Differentiate Words

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	-	-
Agree	1	6,6%
Strongly Disagree	11	73,3%
Disagree	3	20%
Total		100%

According to the table above, more pupils struggle than succeed when it comes to word differentiation during listening tests. More than half of the samples have major disagreements. It might be argued that students find uncomfortable discriminating words on the TOEFL listening test.

Table 11. I Feel Comfortable Listening without a Chance to Read the Transcript of the Speech

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	5	33,3%
Agree	6	40%
Strongly Disagree	2	13,3%
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

The table shows that more pupils feel at ease listening than are uncomfortable, even without the opportunity to read the speech's transcript. It demonstrates that 2

(13,3%) students strongly disagree with it and that the statement is also unpopular with 2 (13,3%) pupils.

Table 12. I Have Difficulties in Understanding Oral Instructions

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	53,3%
Agree	3	20%
Strongly Disagree	1	6,6%
Disagree	3	20%
Total		100%

It is clear from the data above that the majority of students find it challenging to comprehend spoken instruction. Three pupils (20%) disagree with the statement, and six percent of them strongly do.

Table 13. It is Difficult to Concentrate and Hear a Speaker I Do not Know Well

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	-	-
Agree	1	6,6%
Strongly Disagree	9	60%
Disagree	5	33,3%
Total		100%

According to the table above, 9 students (or 60%) strongly disagree that it is difficult to concentrate when listening to a speaker they are unfamiliar with. Compared to those who agree, the percentage is larger. It is clear that pupils believe it is simple to concentrate and comprehend the words spoken by someone they do not know.

Table 14. I Feel Confident in my Listening Skill

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	-	-
Agree	2	13,3%
Strongly Disagree	7	46,6%
Disagree	6	40%
Total		100%

According to the data above, more than half of the pupils lack confidence in their listening abilities. Only 2 pupils, or 13.3%, are comfortable using it.

Table 15. I often Get so Confused that I Cannot Remember What I Have Heard

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	9	60%
Agree	5	33,3
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

When they are unable to recall what they have heard, 60% of pupils, or more than half of them, become extremely perplexed. Only 1 student (6.6%) disagrees with the opinion that it is perplexing, which is shared by 5 students (33,3%).

Table 16. I Get Worried When I Have Little Time to Think about What I Have Heard

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	9	60%
Agree	6	40%
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Total		100%

Students believe they need time to think during tests. The TOEFL test, however, has a time limit. The pupils must therefore be careful with how they use each question's time. Their concern when they only have a brief period of time to reflect on what they heard in the listening part. More than half of students (60%) strongly agree with it, and (40%) students agree, as seen in the table above.

Table 17. I often End Up Translating Word by Word without Understanding What I am Listening

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	53,3%
Agree	4	26,6%
Strongly Disagree	1	6,6%
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

The amount of students who frequently translate word for word while not understanding what they are listening is larger than the number of students who do not, according to the table above. 13,3% of respondents disagree, while 6,6% strongly disagree.

Table 18. I am Worried I Might not Understanding When the Person Lower their Voice while Speaking in English.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	7	46,6%
Agree	6	40%
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

To ensure that listeners comprehend, a speaker should use clear language. The listener may become concerned that they won't be able to understand the speaker when she or he speaks more softly, especially while speaking a foreign language. According to the data in the table above, the majority of students (46,6%) strongly agree and (40%) concur that they worry when English speakers speak with a low voice.

Table 19. It often Happens that I Do not Understand what English Speaker Say

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	4	26,6%
Agree	9	60%
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	13,3%
Total		100%

More than half of students have trouble understanding native speakers when they speak. As seen in the table, more than half of students (60%) concur that they frequently are unable to understand what English speakers are saying, whereas just 13% think it occurs frequently.

Table 20. The Thought that I May be Missing Key Words Frightens Me

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	53,3%
Agree	5	33,3%
Strongly Disagree	1	6,6%
Disagree	1	6,6%
Total		100%

Students can better understand the subject by locating the important phrase while listening. The students are alarmed by the possibility of missing crucial words. Table 20 demonstrates that the majority of pupils (53%) strongly agree and (33,3%) concur that they are frightened by it.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that students have a significant level of worry over the TOEFL's listening comprehension component. The average student response to the questionnaire demonstrates substantial agreement and agreement with statement number 9 that students experience anxiety when taking the TOEFL test's listening comprehension component (86,6%). Only a small percentage of students (13,2%) disagree with the statement. This indicates that (86.6%) of students experience anxiety when taking the TOEFL listening comprehension section. As a result of getting stuck on one or two foreign words (20% strongly agree) and (66,6% agree), students find the listening comprehension component of the TOEFL test to be stressful. (6,6%) strongly agree and (80%) agree that the pupils have trouble understanding native speakers whose pronunciation is different from their own. (53%) highly agree and (40%) agree that they worry they won't be able to grasp when others speak too quickly. (73,4%) highly agree and (20%) agree that people get nervous when they are unfamiliar with the subject. The fact that individuals may be missing vital knowledge is another factor contributing to their anxiety, according to (53,3) and (40%) respectively.

2. The Result of Interview

In order to support the primary data obtained from the questionnaire, the author conducted direct interviews with the students who participated in the study. Three questions made up the semi-structured interview.

For the question number one, the writer asked about “*confidence when doing a TOEFL test on listening comprehension section*”. Nearly all pupils are quite insecure about their ability to listen in English. It's because they don't frequently practice with the TOEFL test, they don't adequately study for the test, and they don't really enjoy it. They claim that is the hardest talent and that you need to pay close attention.

For the question number two is “*are you aware of being really anxious on a test, that you do not do your best and lose points even though you have studied and prepare well?*” They all admitted that they were quite nervous throughout the test and forgot all they had learnt since native speakers speak too quickly, and they frequently receive negative feedback about the TOEFL's Listening Comprehension Section from their peers who had taken it.

The question number three is “*have you find your mind racing and so blank so that you cannot think clearly during the test? Trouble organizing your thoughts?*” They

all claimed to have had the same experience, where they could not answer thoughtfully when their thoughts were blank due to the unfamiliar issue and the accent of the native speaker, which was different from their own. Most students answered about half of the questions by guesswork because they were worried and did not know what native speakers had stated.

The listening comprehension component causes concern for all of the interviewees, they all concur. The best method to comprehend the material is to focus intensely on the speaker. However, the interview subjects start to feel awkward about the queries. They worry about missing and losing the knowledge they have heard.

Even though they may feel anxious, pupils who lack sufficient confidence in their listening abilities are aware of how to get over it. They all concur that preparation and practice are the keys to managing anxiety throughout the test. More over half of the sample members find it difficult to understand native speakers' speech, as seen in table 1.20. The proportion of students who believe it is challenging to understand those who pronounce English differently is the same. The interview was where the writer also learned about it. The students' goal is to gain more practice listening to native English speakers so they can feel less anxious about the TOEFL's listening comprehension section. Finding the important information or key word during the test, maintaining concentrate with what the speaker says, and eliminating any distractions are some strategies offered by interviewees for reducing anxiety during the TOEFL listening comprehension part.

D. CONCLUSION

Due to their perception that listening comprehension is the most difficult ability and one that demands close attention, students admit to feeling anxious about it. They also frequently hear negative feedback from their seniors who have taken the test. They also report having anxiety when they are unfamiliar with the subject matter. Finally, they reveal feeling anxious that they won't be able to understand when people speak too quickly. Lack of practice and preparation prior to the test may also make them more anxious. Students can take a number of actions to manage their anxiety. In order to pass the test with a good score, individuals must first develop their confidence and belief in

their listening abilities. Second, extensive practice can help test-takers become accustomed with the TOEFL exam.

The most important element that causes students anxiety when taking the TOEFL listening comprehension test is that they cannot understand native speakers whose pronunciation is different from their own. The second factor is when they listen to unfamiliar topics or terms. When they are unable to connect a topic or word to their prior knowledge, students become anxious. When they do not comprehend every word in the TOEFL listening comprehension section, it may hinder their ability to comprehend the entire issue, they are omitting crucial details, and they become anxious and confused. The final justification given by students is that they seldom ever practice and study extensively prior to the TOEFL listening comprehension test.

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