

# **A STUDY ON THE LISTENING ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM FKIP UNIVERSITAS RIAU IN COMPREHENDING ACADEMIC TALKS**

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this study is to find out the listening ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks. The population of this research were all of the fourth semester students which consisted of 89 students. There were 48 students who participated in this study. The instrument was a test adapted from TOEFL Test (Listening Comprehension Part C). The test consisted of 8 academic talks and had 4 questions for each talk. Before the test was administered, the test was tried out to find out the difficulty level and the reliability of the test. To analyze the data, the mean score of the students was calculated and the level of ability was identified by using the classification of ability level by Harris (1974). The result showed that the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks was at Good level with mean score 61.2. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the students were able to comprehend talks related to academic situations. However, the students are suggested to practice listening to various aural inputs especially academic talks to improve the ability in listening due to the poorness of their listening ability.*

**Key Words:** *Listening Ability, Listening Comprehension, Academic Talks*

# **PENELITIAN TERHADAP KEMAMPUAN MENDENGARKAN MAHASISWA SEMESTER EMPAT PROGRAM STUDI BAHASA INGGRIS FKIP UNIVERSITAS RIAU DALAM MEMAHAMI WACANA AKADEMIK**

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan mendengarkan mahasiswa semester empat Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau dalam memahami wacana akademik. Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah seluruh mahasiswa semester empat yang terdiri dari 89 orang. Terdapat 48 orang yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah tes yang diadaptasi dari tes TOEFL (Listening Comprehension Part C). Tes terdiri dari 8 wacana akademik dan tiap wacana terdiri dari 4 pertanyaan. Sebelum tes dilaksanakan, tes tersebut diujikan untuk mengetahui tingkat kesulitan dan reliabilitasnya. Untuk menganalisis data, nilai rata-rata dari mahasiswa dihitung dan level kemampuannya diidentifikasi menggunakan klasifikasi level kemampuan oleh Harris (1974). Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan mendengarkan mahasiswa semester empat Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau dalam memahami wacana akademik adalah baik dengan rata-rata 61.2. Jadi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa hampir semua mahasiswa mampu untuk memahami wacana yang berhubungan dengan situasi akademik. Namun, mahasiswa tersebut disarankan untuk melatih mendengarkan beragam masukan lisan terutama wacana akademik untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mendengarkan karena beberapa mahasiswa masih buruk dalam mendengarkan wacana akademik.

**Kata Kunci:** Kemampuan Mendengarkan, Mendengar Pemahaman, Wacana Akademik

## INTRODUCTION

Listening has an important role in learning language. Through listening, students can acquire information, know the correct pronunciation, and acquire interactive communication from other interlocutors, etc. Brown (2004) states that one's oral production ability-other than monologues, speeches, reading aloud and the like- is only as good as one's listening comprehension ability. But of even further impact is the likelihood that input in the aural-oral mode accounts for a large proportion of successful language acquisition.

Academic talks are common for English Study Program students because they face it during lectures and academic situations. The importance of academic listening tests is supported by Ellis (2003) in Jeon (2007) who points out that academic listening tasks offer a promising tool for investigating the processes involved in language comprehension and acquisition. Therefore, this study measured the listening ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program in comprehending academic talks in order to find out how is the ability of the students to comprehend the language related to education.

Listening means *"paying attention to somebody or something that you can hear"* (Hornby, 2000). In addition, Aryadoust (2013) states *"second language listening is the process of receiving aural input delivered in a second language, decoding it, and reconstructing it to make sense of it. It involves a much higher degree of active (conscious) information processing than L1 listening comprehension."* It can be concluded that it is more difficult for foreign language students in comprehending aural input than for the native students. In order to encounter the difficulty in listening, the students should practice the skills to comprehend the language. *"In the process of sourcing information and making meaning of it, students would need to be critical in their selection of information and employ comprehension skills such as literal comprehension skill, inferential comprehension skill, and critical comprehension skill"* (Caroll, 2008); literal comprehension skill means identifying explicit information such as explicitly stated main idea, supporting ideas, and the sequence of events; inferential comprehension skill means identifying implicit information such as implicit details, conclusions, etc.; and critical comprehension skill means making judgment about information and relating the information to personal life.

One of the aural inputs related to academic listening is academic talk. The academic-talk consists of two words, talk and academic. The talk is to speak to somebody about something in order to give information or to express feelings, ideas, etc. (Hornby, 2000); and the academic is something connected with education especially studying in schools and universities (Hornby, 2000). Therefore, the academic talk is to speak to somebody about something connected with education especially in schools and universities in order to give information. For instance lectures, instructions, university orientation, etc.

When selecting the materials to be tested to the students which focus only on the standard language, relevancy to the syllabus and comprehensible topics, the talks in TOEFL practice test were determined. According to Rogers (2011), the talks in TOEFL test contained academic topics which deal with the following components. They are:

1. *The Introductory Comments*; these comments provide some brief information about the talks such as give a general idea of the topic of the talk,

2. *The Talks*; talks are monologues which resemble lectures given as a part of university course or talks that might be heard at university such as campus organizations, registration procedures, or the services at a campus medical center,
3. *The Questions*; the questions about mini-talks are overview questions or detail questions, which cover two matters. The matters are: (a) Overview questions require an understanding of the entire talk, and (b) Detail questions ask about specific points in the talk. Detail questions are factual questions that the answers are directly stated in the talk and inference questions that the answers to these questions are not directly stated in the talk), and
4. *The Answer Choices*; the four choices are all plausible answers for the questions.

Based on various phenomena of listening to academic talks that have been discussed earlier, this research examined the listening ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks. So, the research question is formulated as follows: How is the listening ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks?

## METHODOLOGY

The population of this research were all of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in Academic Year 2016/2017 which consisted of 89 students. There were 48 students were taken as the sample by using cluster random sampling. The time for conducting the research was 1 month starting from April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 until May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The try-out test was carried out on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to 28 students. After the try-out test was analyzed and revised, the test was administered to different classes on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 and May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The test was given to 2 classes due to insufficient number of students in 1 class. The total of respondents from 2 classes was 48 students.

The data of this study were obtained by giving a test to the respondents. The test consisted of 32 multiple-choice questions about academic talks which were selected from *Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test (PBT)* by Deborah Philips and *The Complete Guide to the TOEFL Test PBT Edition* by Bruce Rogers. The test consisted of 8 talks. For each talk, there were 4 questions. There were 4 answer choices which all plausible for the question. The length of the talk was 1-2 minutes which consisted of 200-300 words. The administration of the test followed the steps of administering TOEFL Test. The time for answering the question was 10 seconds after the question was played.

A try-out test was given to 28 students to find out the difficulty level and reliability of the test. For difficulty level, the test item is accepted if the facility value is between 0.3-0.7. The test is reliable if the reliability is  $>0.6$ . The result showed that there were 7 rejected items. So, the objectives of the questions were revised. The reliability of the test was 0.639, which means the test was reliable.

To analyze the data, descriptive statistic technique was used. The category of the mean can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**The Classification of the Scores of the Students**

No	Range of Scores	Level of Ability
1	80-100	Excellent
2	60-79	Good
3	50-59	Average
4	0-49	Poor

(Harris, 1974)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After administering the test, the scores of the students were obtained. The scores of the students in listening to academic talks are shown in table 2:

**Table 2**  
**The Listening Ability in Comprehending Academic Talks**

No	Score Range	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1	80-100	Excellent	9	19 %
2	60-79	Good	20	42%
3	50-59	Average	8	17%
4	0-49	Poor	11	23%
Total			48	100%

Table 2 classifies the ability of the students into 4 levels; Excellent, Good, Average, and Poor. The result shows that most of the students were at good level. There were 9 students got scores more than 80, 8 students were at average level, and 23% of the students were poor in comprehending academic talks. The highest score was 87.5 and the lowest score was 31.5. The mean score of the students was 61.2 which mean the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks was good.

The ability of the fourth semester students in comprehending academic talks was analyzed separately according to the type of questions such as overview, factual information, and inference questions.

**Figure 1**

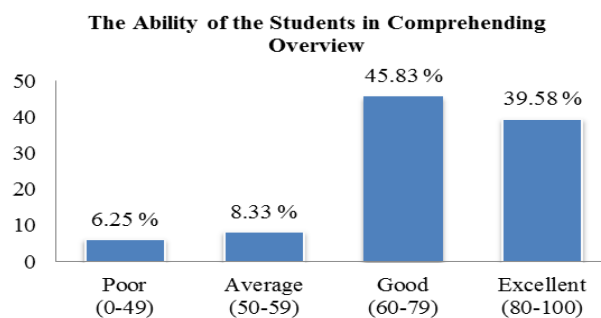
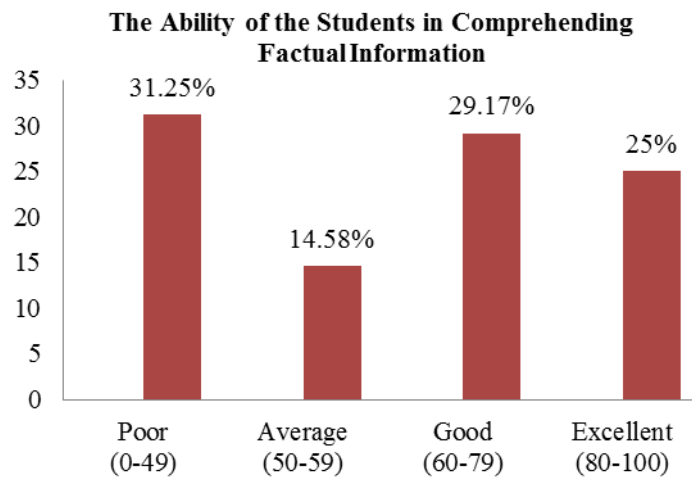


Figure 1 shows most of the students could answer the questions asking about the overview of the talk. It can be seen that 39.58% of the students were at excellent level; 45.83% were at good level; and 8.33% of the students were at average level. Only a few of them were at poor level (6.25%). The mean score of the ability of the students in comprehending the overview of the talk was 71.88 which categorized as good level.

**Figure 2**



In Figure 2, the number of the students who were at poor level was the highest with percentage 31.25%. But overall, most of the students could answer the questions about factual information. The percentage of the students at average level was 14.58%, the students who were at good level 29.17%, and the students at excellent level was 25%. The mean score of the students in answering factual information of the talks was 60.56 which categorized as good level.

**Figure 3**

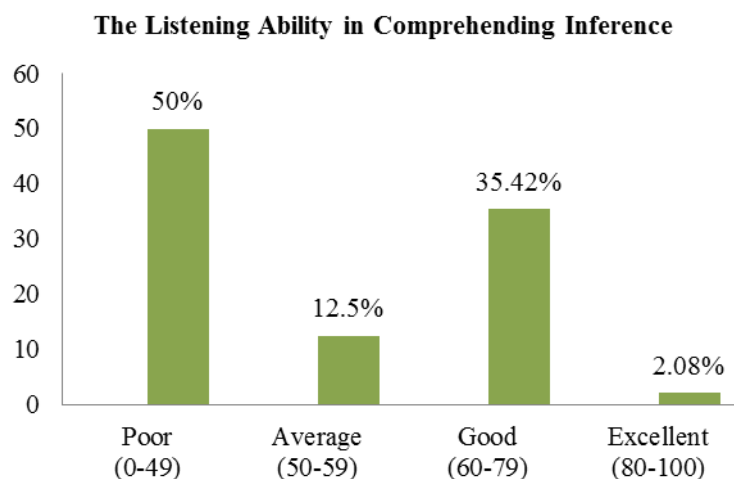


Figure 3 shows the ability of the students in comprehending inference. Unfortunately, 50% of the students were at poor level which means that half of the students had

difficulty in finding inferential details. At average level, there was 12.5% of the students, 35.42% of the students at good level and only 2.08% at excellent level. Overall, the ability of the students in comprehending inference was at average level with mean score 52.78.

Based on the findings of the research, the formulation of the problem “how is the listening ability of the fourth semester students English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks?” is answered. Based on the analysis of the data, the listening ability of the students was at good level which means the students could comprehend talks which were related to academic situations. Although most of the students were above average level, not few of them such as 23% of the students were at poor level. Moreover, by comparing the ability of the students per type of questions, it can be concluded that inference questions was the most difficult questions for the fourth semester students of English Study program Universitas Riau. Therefore, it was assumed that the poorness of listening ability in comprehending academic talks due to the students’ difficulty in comprehending the inferential information of the talks.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the listening ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau in comprehending academic talks was at good level. The mean score of the students was 61.2. The highest score was 87.5 and the lowest score was 31.25. Overall, most of the students were able to comprehend talks which are related to academic situations. Moreover, answering inference questions was the most difficult for the students compared to other types of questions because half of students were poor in answering inference questions.

Related to the findings, there are some suggestions for the students; a) the students are required to evaluate themselves of their abilities in listening to academic talks and identify their problems in listening and answering comprehension questions; b) the students should practice listening to various aural inputs especially academic talks to improve the ability, due to the poorness of their listening ability; c) the students should practice comprehension skills such as literal skills, inferential skills, and critical skills in listening which are not only useful for learning but also for teaching; d) the students are suggested to learn about the strategy to answer TOEFL questions especially listening comprehension section because in reality, many students found it difficult to answer TOEFL questions about listening; and e) other researchers to explore more about listening study to solve the problem of listening which is one of difficult subject for the students.

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