

## THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGE AT ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM

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### Abstrak

Fokus kajian dalam penelitian ini adalah pada Penilaian Pemahaman Mendengarkan Siswa melalui Kerangka Referensi Bahasa Eropa Umum pada Program Pendidikan Inggris. Adapun tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pada tingkat manakah kemampuan menyimak mahasiswa semester 4 Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram dengan mengacu pada tingkatan yang dikeluarkan oleh CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference for Language*) dan mengidentifikasi kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa saat mengikuti ujian menyimak. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 40 siswa semester 4 yang telah mendapatkan mata kuliah *Listening 1, Listening 2, dan Advanced Listening*. Sedangkan, teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah Tes Mendengarkan dan Wawancara. Hasil yang ditemukan pada penelitian ini adalah tingkat kemampuan menyimak mahasiswa berada pada tingkat Intermediate (B1). dalam penelitian ini ini juga ditemukan tiga faktor yang mempengaruhi mahasiswa sehingga mereka kesulitan saat proses belajar ataupun saat mengerjakan tes listening. Tiga faktor ini yaitu materi tes, perilaku mahasiswa saat belajar dan mengikuti tes listening, dan lingkungan atau situasi sekitar mahasiswa saat mengerjakan tes.

**Kata Kunci:** Penilaian, kemampuan menyimak, CEFR

### Abstract

In learning English, listening is implemented at some levels such as beginner, intermediate and advanced. These levels must be comprehended by the students. Therefore a teacher or lecturer must be ready for the media and strategy in ensuring students' listening comprehension at every level. This study aims to find out the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (CEFR) level of the 4th students of the English Department of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram University who have

passed the listening course Listening 1, Listening 2, and Advanced Listening. And then, to find out the difficulties that were encountered by the students during the listening test using CEFR listening levels. The methodology of this research was qualitative descriptive. There were 40 students gathered to be a respondent. The data was taken by conducting a listening test to find out the students' level through CEFR. The listening test was conducted three times by applying a five-level worksheet that represented CEFR levels. And then an in-depth interview was taken to seek students' difficulties that they faced during the listening test. The result of this study revealed that the level of the 4th semester of the English Department of University Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram is at the Intermediate (B1) level. Based on students' in-depth interviews, showed some factors that become an obstacle for students during the listening test. There are listening material, students' attitudes, and test environments.

***Key words: Assessment, Listening Level of CEFR***

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Listening is one of the traditional ways to develop English language skills. Although its existence is often ignored in the learning process. However, listening is the most important skill in the development of communication in English. It has a main function in learning a second language. Listening is also the most frequently used language modality. It is estimated that adults spend nearly half of their communication time in listening, and students can receive as much as 90% of the information in their school through listening to instructors and each other. Often, however, language learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing their listening skills.

Considering its importance in the process of learning and teaching English, it is important for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. So that teachers are required to be more creative and understand how the learning processes are used in applying learning methods in listening.

Based on some review of related study, Listening is the last part of the main focus in the English teaching and learning

process. Listening is often overlooked by its sister skill of speaking (Ismail & Aziz, 2013). According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) the most crucial problem actually comes from the education provider itself. Universities always pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not significant parts of many books and lecturers do not consider these skills in their classes.

On the other hand, many students face the difficulty comprehending the listening skill, they are not accustomed to hearing the English sound from native speakers. It was caused by lack of experience in listening native speakers when they were in Junior High School until Senior High School. It also does not escape from how the teachers' role in carrying out the listening practice. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) mentioned that there are eight main role of teacher in listening activities: 1) A teacher as an organizer, 2) A teacher as a controller, 3) A teacher as an evaluator, 4) A teacher as a resources, 5) A teacher as an investigator, 6) A teacher as a prompter, 7) A teacher as a tutor, and 8) A teacher as a participant. If the teacher able to do these role, it might be

helping the students in achieving listening activity in the class.

Based on the curriculum of the English Education Program of University Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram, students should master three levels of listening comprehension. There is basic listening in semester one, intermediate listening in semester two and extensive listening in semester three. And at each level students must master it as a requirement to move to the next level.

CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) was set as language standard in the curriculum of English Education Program in Universitas Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram and it is used as a language assessment in teaching listening process.

CEFR has many learning materials as worksheets that can be printed out and are very helpful for the teacher. CEFR provides materials in three levels (English basic, English Independent user and Proficient English user). Therefore, based on the following background above, this study aims to assess students' listening comprehension through CEFR level. And also to find out the students' difficulties during the listening test using CEFR level. The following research questions are follows:

1. What is the CEFR level of the 4<sup>th</sup> students of the English Department of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram University?
2. What are the difficulties that are encountered by the students during the listening test using CEFR listening levels?

According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) Listening comprehension is the skill of understanding the sound or message that the receiver listens to. It is also defined as the product of teaching methodology and is matched by terms such as speech understanding, spoken language understanding, speech recognition, and

speech perception. the most crucial problem actually comes from the education provider itself.

They also stated that in implementing English language learning, schools always pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not significant parts of many books and teachers do not consider these skills in their classes. In the same way some educational providers neglect and overlook listening with her sister speaking. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016)

On the other hand, Nadig (2013), explained that listening comprehension is the various processes of understanding and making sense of spoken language. These involve knowing speech sounds, comprehending the meaning of individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences. Based on the previous definition above, listening comprehension should be paid more attention by the teacher and the learner during the teaching and learning process. Siregar (2017) explained that listening comprehension is a fundamental language skill in which students need to gain adequate proficiency.

Continuing the result of previous study, Hamouda (2013) stated that students have crucial problems in listening comprehension in EFL because schools focus more on reading, vocabulary and grammar. Speaking and listening is not too significant of many books, so the teachers do not consider applying this skill in the class.

listening difficulties take a high role as the failure of students in listening comprehension. Based on Darti and Asmawati (2017) study, they found that students' difficulties toward listening comprehension showed that listening is a very difficult skill for students who study

foreign languages. It was based on three factors influencing their listening; they were listening material, listener factor, and physical setting. Therefore, accents, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of the speakers, lack of concentration, and bad quality of recording were the major problems encountered by students' English Education Department.

These findings also strengthen the suggestion from Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016); Darti & Asmawati, (2017). These suggestions indicated that when teachers are aware of students' learning difficulties they can help them develop effective listening strategies and finally solve their difficulties in listening and improve their listening comprehension abilities. And also the solutions to overcome the problems were: the teacher should adapt and improve listening material, activate students' vocabulary, give the students variety of accent while practice listening in language laboratory, improve their pronunciation by training from native speakers, building students' knowledge about the topic, give some strategy in listening, and always motivate students.

Nushi and Orouji (2020) were collecting the result from students' interview about their difficulties in listening comprehension. Based on their interview they found that learners' listening difficulties belonged to three categories, namely, pronunciation-based, individual characteristics-based and content-based difficulties. From their result, they also suggested that overcoming listening difficulties without listening strategies, though not impossible, seems to be much more time consuming.

The newest finding of students' listening barrier mentioned by Purwanto, Fadhly, and Rahmatunisa (2021). They

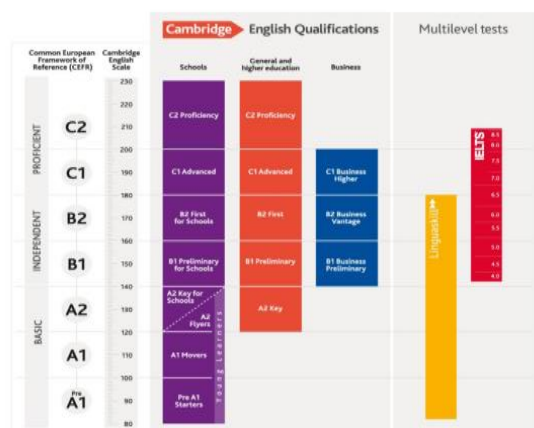
mentioned that there are five barriers that faced student in listening activities: 1) accent, 2) speed, 3) lack of concentration, 4) unclear statements from speakers, and 5) speaker did not describe clearly.

CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) is an international framework put together by the Council of Europe as a way of standardizing the levels of language in different regions. CEFR English levels are used by all modern English language books and English language schools. According to Morrow (2004) cited in Fişne, et al (2018), he defines the CEFR as a means of developing language teaching in Europe by finding a way to compare the objectives and achievement standards of learners in different national contexts.

More specifically, Fişne, et al (2018) explained that CEFR serves as a detailed map for teachers, curriculum developers, and course designers to improve current practices by adapting the ideas and resources set out in the framework. It is a product of the Council of Europe (CoE) that began in the late 1950s.

CEFR serves resources for all English skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening). Each skill is divided into six levels of language testing: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. Related to CEFR, Cambridge provides English Qualification based on research into effective teaching and learning. The description of Cambridge English Qualification is shown in the diagram below.

**Diagram 1. Cambridge English Qualification**



(<http://cambridgeenglish.org/cefr>)

The British council also serves as the self-study lessons in this section are written and organized according to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). Here the descriptions of British Council CEFR - Listening Test Level are described on table below.

Table 1. *British Council CEFR - Listening Test Level*

No	Level	Description
1	A1 Beginner	Listening practice to help you understand familiar words and basic phrases when people speak slowly and clearly. Situations include meeting people, shopping and communications at work.
2	A2 - Pre Intermediate	Listening practice to help you understand common vocabulary and expression in short, clear dialogues. Situations include simple explanations, introductions, massages, and announcements.

- 3 B1- Intermediate Listening  
 Listening practice to help you understand the main points of clear standard speech about everyday or job related topics. Situations include phone calls, meetings and interviews.
- 5 B2- Upper Intermediate  
 Listening practice to help you understand extended standard speech about familiar topics that may contain complex ideas. Situations include broadcasts, reviews, presentations, and lectures.
- 6 C1- Advanced English  
 Listening practice to help you understand extended standard speech about abstract, complex or unfamiliar topics. Situations include job interviews, lectures, talks and meetings.

**Source:**

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening>

In other hand, to make sure the students had reached out their listening comprehension, teacher and lecturer must do the assessment as the evaluation of teaching listening. In term of assessment Barbara E. Walvoord, (2004) in Pryla, (2017) defines assessment as “the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decision about how to improve learning” (Pryla, 2017: p-24).

In the same ways, educational assessment refers to activities such as test and evaluation which aim to collecting



information for making decisions through observation, self-report, and test in order to improve students' learning process; therefore assessment is the main role in identifying the students' strength and weaknesses in learning language (Nadia, 2013).

According to CEFR that is used to assess listening skill, the British Council Foundation provides many worksheets with the key answer in many platforms including online platforms. It used to help the lecturer in assessing students' listening comprehension.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is a descriptive qualitative research with survey research strategy. Hardani, et al (2020:54) defined the survey research strategy into three goals: 1) looking for detailed factual information that affects symptoms which exists; 2) identify problems or get the justification of ongoing activities; 3) to find out the things done by the people who are the target of research in solving problems, as material for planning and decision making in the future.

This study will conduct at English Education Program of Universitas Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram (UNW Mataram) and will spend time for six months with the source of data in this study is a respondent which is the students of English education program of UNW Mataram who have got basic listening, intermediate listening and extensive listening. 15 students and 2 lecturers will be employed as the respondent and purposive sampling will be used as the sampling technique.

For data instruments, two main data will be collected. The first data is the respondents, events and activities; the second data is students' listening test, FGD and in depth interview. The observation, listening test, FGD and in depth interview will become procedures in collecting the

data. Hence, triangulation techniques will be used as the technique. This technique will help the researcher to collect the data by combining various data collection techniques and data sources that already exist (Hardani, et al, 2020:120).

Preliminary observation on the use of CEFR materials as a learning media in listening skills will be the first step in the effort to collect data in this study. The observation may employ two lecturers of the English Education Program of UNW Mataram to take a view of using CEFR materials in teaching listening. The second step is students' assignment by conducting CEFR - A2, B2 and C1 listening test level.

This step will take a score of students' listening comprehension through CEFR listening levels. And the third step is an in - depth interview. It was conducted to find out the difficulties that students' faced during the listening test.

The research procedure in this study will conduct several stages. The first stage is data collection, data collection is get from oral and written event which related to observation, listening test, and in dept interview; the second stage is data selection, data collected then grouped, selected, and sorted out later to be analyzed; the third is data analysis, all of data selections will be analyzed by using interactive model of data analysis technique by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014).

Interactive data analysis model is the data reduction and display of data that takes into account the result of the data collected, and then will continue into the process of drawing conclusion and verification (Hardani, et al, 2020:173); Fourth, preparation of research reports.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

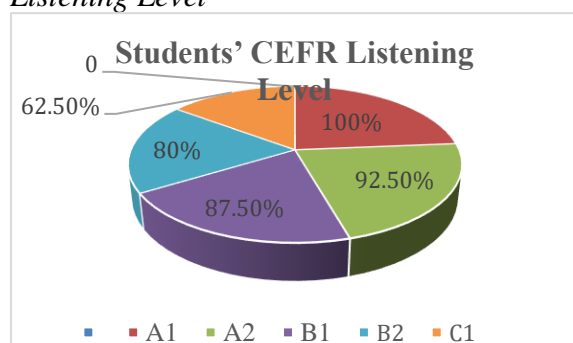
After collecting and analyze the data, the findings were:

### a. Students' Listening Level

Listening test was conducted in 3 sections. The first section students got listening worksheet level A1 and A2. For the second section, they got the listening worksheet level B1 and B2. And the last section listening worksheet for level C1 was delivered to the students. For the worksheet, the researcher adopted it from the British Council website (<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening>).

Based on the result of the listening test, the listening ability of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester of English Education Department students of Nahdlatul Mataram University is in between A1 – B2 CEFR Levels.

Diagram 2. *Percentage of Students' Listening Level*



The percentage above showed that 100% (40 students) were able to do the listening test in A1 level and 92.5% (37 students) were in level A2. 87.5% (35 students) passed the B1 level and 80% (32 students) were in B2 level. And then, just 62.5% (25 students) were able to do the listening test through C1 level of CEFR.

Hence, we can say that the average level of the listening ability of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester of English students of Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram is still in intermediate (B1) level.

Based on indicator levels of CEFR listening test by British Council, students with B1 level are able to understand the main points of clear, standard speech about

everyday or job-related topics, situations include phone calls, meetings and interviews. (<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening>)

Based on indicators of achievement approved by EF SET (EF Standard English Test) students with B1 level have been mastering basic English but the ability was not enough to work and study exclusively in English. (<https://www.efset.org/id/cefr/b1/>)

It might be a challenge for the lecture to improve students' level. It is because university students are expected to pass the level B2 (Upper Intermediate). At this level students are able to function independently in a variety of academic and professional environments using English, although with varying nuances and limited accuracy. (<https://www.efset.org/id/cefr/b2/>)

### b. Students Difficulties

Referring to an in depth interview, the result showed students' opinion about the listening test through CEFR levels. There are some difficulties for students during the listening test, such as: listening material, students' attitude, and testing environment.

#### *Listening Material*

Most students had difficulties in listening to the audio with long conversations and talks/monologues such as presentations or teacher's lectures in class. Basically students prefer to hear short dialogue or conversation rather than talk. It is because the phrases in the dialogue are easy to understand and the voice combination between two speakers give a color in the sound. While the sound of talks makes students bored even more, the language used is academic language with difficult terms. It existed in Brown (2001) that cited by Safriyanti (2021) that stated there are some reduction forms in the utterance of conversation sentence/monologue that are hard to

conquer by students such as phonologically, syntactically and pragmatically. Of course these reductions must be understood by the students so they can catch the intended meaning of the audio correctly.

Besides that the dialect in the audio is a trouble to the students. They realized that British dialect is difficult to understand. The stress on the dialect produces unfamiliar pronunciation for students. This result is similar to a study conducted by Darti and Asmawati (2017), they found that accents, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of the speakers were the major problems encountered by students' English Education Department.

Meanwhile, some topics of the listening, especially in level B2 and C1 were unfamiliar to the students. It makes it hard to catch the point or main idea of the listening. Hence, it also obstructs the students to do the worksheet correctly.

### *Students' Attitude*

We can not deny that students' attitude can be a problem that they encounter themselves in improving their listening ability. Based on the students' interview, it showed that students' motivation in listening to the English language in various dialects and accents. Most students claimed they are more comfortable listening to audio in American dialect than other dialects. And then, the anxiety also haunts the students especially when they are not well prepared in doing the listening test. Prastiyowati (2019), stated that '*self - efficacy*' is one of the factors that caused the problem to the students. It showed how the students present their learning process in improving listening skill. In her study it explained that self - efficacy reflected a 'low confidence'. The students tended to give up and claimed that learning English is difficult.

### *Testing Environment*

The environment when students conduct the listening test affected the performance of the students and the testing result. The Appropriate place like a lab is needed. The equipment for conducting the listening test should be concerned. Complete facilities might be give good environment to the students. And then, the availability of comfortable room, advanced device like audio speaker or headset will help lecturer in delivering listening learning and testing process. It similar with Prastiyowati (2019), she mentioned that room condition and distraction from environment may cause the students' anxiety and make unfocused in learning process. The result of her study, it showed that students enjoy to learn listening in conductive and silent room. They can be more focus in hearing the audio and the text without considering a destruction from other noise that can disturb their concentrate.

### **Discussion**

This research aimed to find out the students' level through CEFR and to find out the students' difficulties dring listening activities. Based on the finding of this research, in Assessing students' listening achievement, CEFR could be standard in referring to students' level. There are many platforms that provide listening testing such as the British Council and EF SET. Using this platform teacher and lecture will be helpful. They offered many validated worksheets with audio, video, podcast, and scoring.

After finding the students' level, the teacher can find any strategy to improve the level. Based on the finding, the level of student was Intermediate (B1) level which is for 4<sup>th</sup> semester students. It should be higher than B1 level because they already have a listening course (listening 1, listening 2 and advanced listening) in 1<sup>st</sup> semester until 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. In Thongsook (2018) study, it showed B1 level was tested



to 1<sup>st</sup> semester undergraduate students at That Phanom College, Nakhon Phanom University. Based on the statistical result of this study the students' level was low.

The students' low level might be caused by some difficulties that they encountered. For the 4<sup>th</sup> semester students of University Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram, the difficulties were about listening material, students' attitude and testing environment.

In delivering a listening course, the lecturer and teacher should be concerned about the listening indicator, learners' need and listening capacity in improving their listening comprehension. Prastiyowati (2019) students may get anxiety during their listening when the listening material was delivered in speed talks or conversation. And also if there are many unfamiliar vocabulary, dialects accents of the native speaker that are difficult to understand to the students.

It also happen in Purwanto, Fadhly, and Rahmatunisa (2021) study. They do the assessment of students' listening level. They do the assessment to three best group students of 4<sup>th</sup>-semester students based on the CEFR level - Upper intermediate (C1) and Advance level. During the assessment, the students also faced the many barriers in listening activities. The students difficult about Unfamiliar accents both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension and familiarity with an accent helps learners' listening comprehension (*accent*); students also difficult about the speakers' speed If the speakers speak too fast, students may have serious problems to understand L2 words (*speed*); and also about students' lack of vocabulary. A lot of words have more than one meaning and if they are not used appropriately in their appropriate contexts, students will get confused.

The students' attitude and test environment give a big effort to students in conducting the listening test. Some students have a perception that the American dialect

is easier than other dialects of native speakers. It makes the students not confident in receiving an audio or listening test with a dialect other than American dialect. Besides that the appropriate place for conducting listening may give good influence to students. It also happened in the Thongsook's (2018) study. Because the students have low confidence in listening they avoid watching western movies or trying to talk with native speakers. This attitude can be the obstacle to improving their listening skill.

## D.CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, after assessing students' listening level through CEFR level, we get that the listening level of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester of English Department students of University Nahdlatul Wathan Mataram is in Intermediate (B1) level. It is because there are some difficulties for the student. There are Listening material, students' attitude, and test environment. By these results it suggests to the lecturer to find more strategies to develop students' level. For 4<sup>th</sup> semester, the students should be in level Upper Intermediate (B2) and Advance (C1). Besides that, students should change their attitude in improving their listening skill. They have to challenge themselves by listening to many native speaker audio with various dialects. And educational institutions have to prepare the appropriate place for conducting listening tests. Language lab is highly recommended.

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