

**THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FORMATIVE EVALUATION TOWARD
STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN THE LISTENING-TOEFL TEST**

THESIS

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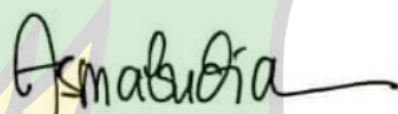
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adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya, apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikian surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

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Saya yang membuat pernyataan,



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ABSTRACT

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Thesis title : The Perceived Impact of Formative Evaluation Toward Students' Difficulties in The Listening TOEFL Test
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Keywords : TOEFL, listening comprehension, formative evaluation, English education.

This study investigated the difficulties faced by English department students at UIN Ar-Raniry in the listening section of the TOEFL test and explored their perceptions of the impact of applying formative evaluation in overcoming these difficulties. This study employed qualitative research design. four eighth-semester students in the treatment class participated in semi-structured interview. The data collected were analysed using Miles and Huberman theory of data analysis. The findings showed four main categories of difficulties: listening problems related to the type of listening comprehension part, especially long conversations and academic discussions; listening problems related to the content of listening test: unfamiliar topic, unfamiliar vocabulary, long spoken text, speed of speech, and accent; listening problems related to the types of listening questions: especially in identifying detailed information and identifying main ideas; and external factors: limited time and background noise. This study also highlighted the positive impact of formative evaluation, which included regular listening exercises, quizzes, and immediate feedback from the teacher. Participants reported that formative evaluation helped them identify their weaknesses, improve their listening skills, and boost their self-confidence. It can be concluded that implementing formative evaluation strategies in TOEFL preparation classes can significantly improve students' listening comprehension and overcoming their difficulties in listening section of the TOEFL test.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of study, research questions, research aims, significance of study, scope of study, and research terminologies.

A. Background of Study

The English education department at the Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry is committed to prepare high-quality future educators with advanced English proficiency. These future teachers are expected to communicate effectively in English and possess the strong writing and reading skills essential for teaching. This aligns with the objectives of the English educational department that students should master the core English course, which comprises macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Habiburrahim, 2019). To measure students' English proficiency, the university requires every student, especially English department students, to take the TOEFL test and must attach a TOEFL certificate with 470 above score to graduate from the university. Therefore, to support the standard of students' English proficiency, TOEFL preparation is incorporated into classroom instruction within the English Department.

The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is generally categorized as a summative evaluation tool, intended to evaluate the language proficiency of students for whom English is a second language (Brown, 2004). Summative evaluation often uses written exams, carried out at the end of a semester

or course to evaluate learning outcomes or provide certification, e.g., high-stakes exams like the ACT, GRE, and SAT (Glazer, 2014). The TOEFL test is divided into several types, the purpose of all types of tests is to measure students' English proficiency, but the costs incurred and the benefits provided from each test are different. The types of TOEFL tests around the world are; Paper-Based Test (PBT), Computer-Based Test (CBT), Internet-Based Test (IBT), and Institutional-Testing Program (ITP) (Abboud & Hussein, 2011), but UIN Ar-raniry students are only asked for TOEFL ITP certificate for graduation requirements.

There are three sections in the TOEFL ITP test, such as listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension (Warfield et al., 2013). Among the three sections of TOEFL ITP test, the listening section is often the most challenging for students in the English Department. The listening section is specifically designed to assess students' ability to understand and process spoken information (Stirling, 2021). It reflects real-life conversation in an educational setting to train students to understand real-life communication. The test includes three parts: short dialogues, long conversations, and talks such as lectures or discussions, all these tests evaluate skills like identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, interpreting complex information, and making inferences (Phillips, 2001).

Based on preliminary research that the researcher conducted at UIN Ar-Raniry, it was revealed that students who have taken the TOEFL test often achieved unsatisfactory scores in the listening section. Even though students had taken

TOEFL preparation courses, e.g., English proficiency tests and advanced language skills, most of them still struggled when preparing for, answering the listening question, or even passing the listening-TOEFL test.

According to a previous study conducted by Rahmah in 2019, with the title “The Students’ Problems in Listening Comprehension of the TOEFL Test”, it was found that in Part A, 9 out of the surveyed students experienced difficulties with specific elements, particularly recognizing synonyms of keywords with 100% failed the test, expression of agreement with 89%, and idioms with 89%. In part C, identifying detail information with 89% failed the test (Rahmah, 2019). Furthermore, Arfianti (2021), said that there are three main problems faced by students in the listening section, such as; problems related to the content of listening comprehension of the TOEFL test: unfamiliar topics, lack of vocabulary, long-spoken text, and form of expression (idioms, phrasal verbs); problems related to the listener: fear before doing the listening (nervousness), loss of concentration, inferring meaning, unclear pronunciation, and unfamiliar words; problems related to physical setting: speed of speech, poor audio/CD quality.

According to Hermida (2021), she said that students faced difficulty in listening comprehension test due to the quality of recorded materials, the length and speed of listening, the limited chance to repeat the words, cultural differences and unfamiliar topics, lack of contextual knowledge, accent or pronunciation, unfamiliar vocabulary, poor grammar, misinterpretation about listening tasks, physical conditions of the classroom, lack of concentration, and lack of motivation.

These listening comprehension difficulties are related to listening TOEFL difficulties. When taking the TOEFL test, most students face difficulties with the length of the listening text and unfamiliar vocabulary so they do not even know the meaning of it, they cannot recognize the synonym of the keyword, also the students do not gain information about what the speaker is talking about because of the accent and the speed at which the speaker speaks.

This issue has contributed to the delays in graduation for many students because they did not pass the TOEFL test and got unsatisfactory scores in the listening comprehension section. Therefore, to overcome students' listening comprehension difficulties, students in the English department must improve their listening skills. Listening skill plays a crucial role in the students' language learning because it can help them improve their other skills significantly (Darti & Asmawati, 2017). In addition, listening skills are also essential for gaining new knowledge due to many universities using English as an instructional language in the learning process. In educational environments, especially students must quickly comprehend spoken explanations, discussions, or conversations around them, such as when the teacher explains the material in English.

For language learners who are preparing for the TOEFL test, mastering listening skills can be challenging due to the variety of accents, vocabulary, and speaking speeds in real-world conversations (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The difficulties faced by students in the listening section are closely related to the

teaching-learning process in the classroom. The weaknesses in the teaching-learning process make it difficult for students to master listening comprehension.

Therefore, to minimize and eliminate the difficulties faced by students in obtaining satisfactory scores on TOEFL tests, the students need to practice more often to improve their listening skills, the lecture at teacher training faculty are also expected to be able to guide and help students in developing their listening skills. According to Kurita (2012), said that many learners find listening comprehension particularly difficult, which highlights the need for teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, methods, and exercises to be more effective. In addition, to overcome this issue, some of the lecturers who were involved in teaching TOEFL preparation applied formative evaluation when teaching listening skills in the classroom or in the treatment class held by LDC (Language Development Centre).

Formative evaluation is very important to address students' difficulties, strengths, and weaknesses in the listening learning process by providing constructive feedback that guides them to improve their skills through listening practice and modifying their learning strategies. Black and Wiliam's (1998), viewed that formative assessment encourages students to recognize their learning gaps and actively work on improving their skills by providing timely feedback. This approach not only motivates students to improve their listening abilities but also encourages teachers to refine the exercises, strategies, and methods they use when teaching listening skills. It can also help students achieve satisfactory scores in summative assessments, such as final exams or the TOEFL test. In addition,

formative evaluation involves evaluating students as they develop their competencies and skills, with the aim of supporting their ongoing growth and improvement (Brown, 2004). Formative evaluation is applied in the classroom to monitor and regulate the listening-learning process (Bayat et al., 2017). Educators can apply formative assessment strategies to encourage students' improvement throughout the academic period and help them prepare for the TOEFL test.

Many previous studies have explained the impact of implementing formative evaluation in the classroom, such as the first study was done by Bayat et al., in 2017, with the title "The Beneficial Impact of Applying Formative Assessment on Iranian University Students' Anxiety Reduction and Listening Efficacy" conducted in an English-language institute in Poldokhtar city, Iran. The aims of this research were to identify the effect of formative assessment used by teachers on students' achievement in EFL classes and its effect on reducing anxiety and improving listening efficacy. The participants of this research were selected through a proficiency pre-test that was given to 80 students and the researchers only selected 60 EFL students with the age range of 19-25. The participants were divided into two groups consisting of 30 students for the experimental group and 30 other students for the control group. The writers used a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental study and used pre- and post-tests to collect data. The data were analysed with a T-test procedure. The result revealed that; there was a significant difference in the level of achievement of the treatment group in the intended matters, and using formative evaluation positively impacts learners' listening skills and comprehension, and also makes the learning process more engaging. This

approach not only enhanced listening abilities but also added an element of enjoyment to the educational experience (Bayat et al., 2017).

The second study conducted by Ghazizadeh and Motallebzadeh in 2017, with the title “The Impact of Diagnostic Formative Assessment on Listening Comprehension Ability and Self-Regulation.” The research questions of this research were; does the diagnostic formative assessment have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learners listening comprehension ability?; does the diagnostic formative assessment have any significant effects on Iranian EFL learners’ self-regulation?; what are the participants’ attitudes towards diagnostic formative assessment?. The writers selected 46 out of 78 EFL students from three language institutes in Torbat-e-Heydareih. To make sure the sample homogeneity, the samples were selected based on the QPT (Quick Placement Test), and then the sample was divided into two groups: twenty-three students for the control group and twenty-three students for the experimental group. This study used mixed-method design with semi-structured interviews to know the participants’ attitudes toward the use of formative assessment in EFL listening comprehension, and also used pre-tests, post-tests, and nineteen-item questionnaires to measure students’ listening ability and self-regulation. The result revealed that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group regarding their performance in the listening test. Based on the results obtained from the pre- and post-tests, it was proved that students’ self-regulation increased while students practiced diagnostic formative assessment. Based on the results of the interviews, students agree that diagnostic formative assessment was very effective in the

listening learning process because students can find their problems and use more strategies to solve their problems. They also agree on the usefulness and practicality of using diagnostic formative assessment for improving their listening comprehension ability and self-regulation (Ghazizadeh & Motallebzadeh, 2017).

The third study was done by Rahmah in 2019, under the title “The Students’ Problem in Listening Comprehension of The TOEFL Test,” in UIN Ar-Raniry. This research only explained; the problem faced by students in answering the listening TOEFL test and the factors influencing the difficulty in answering the listening TOEFL test. The participants of this study were nine of the tenth-semester students, 2018-2019. This research used a mixed-method and the data was collected through various tests and interviews. The result revealed that students faced problems in recognizing synonyms of keywords with 100% failed the test, expression of agreement with 89% failed the test, determining the idiom with 89% failed the test in part A, and identifying detail information with 89% failed the test in part C. The interview result revealed that there were five factors influence the difficulties in answering the listening TOEFL test, such as; problem related to listening materials involved tools: bad audio recording; the content of the listening text: lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar vocabulary, long sentences; mental condition: students feel sleepy, bored, and nervous so they lose their concentration; physical condition: students feel stomach aches and headaches because the room was so cold; environmental conditions: the AC was so cold; time management: students need extra time to answer the question (Rahmah, 2019).

As has been previously mentioned, formative evaluation refers to tool that use to recognise the difficulties and misconceptions during the learning process, to provide feedback, and to seek the solution of how to get over those difficulties. Therefore, it is essential to analyse more deeply about the impact of applying formative evaluation in language learning. Besides, the researcher of this research formulates the title; The perceived Impact of Formative Evaluation Toward Students' Difficulties in The Listening TOEFL test (Case Study at English Language Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry)

B. Research Questions

Based on the background and the previous study, the researcher formulated the research questions as follows:

1. What are the difficulties faced by English department students in the listening-TOEFL test at UIN Ar-Raniry?
2. How do the students perceive the impact of formative evaluation in overcoming their difficulties in the listening-TOEFL test?

C. Research Aims

The researcher formulated the aims of this study based on the research question above, such as:

1. To identify the difficulties faced by students in the listening-TOEFL test at UIN AR-Raniry

2. To explore students' perception of the impact of formative evaluation in overcoming their difficulties in the listening-TOEFL test

D. Significance of Study

The researcher hopes that this research can be significant not only for the researcher but also for the lecturers, students, and all other people who are experts and interested in this topic.

1. For the lecturers

The researcher hopes that this research will provide an advantage for lecturers, especially those in the English Education Department, by providing students' difficulties in achieving a high score in the listening TOEFL. Therefore, this information will assist lecturers in understanding the causes, factors, and solutions to control the students' problems. Thus, the lecturer can decide which strategies and teaching methods are suitable and can be used to enhance students' listening comprehension skills effectively.

2. For the students

The researcher expects that the result of this study will become additional information for the students in increasing their listening skills and in conducting further research. Through this research, the researcher hopes that students can pass and get satisfactory scores on the TOEFL test.

E. Scope of Study

This research is conducted to identify the difficulties faced by students in the listening-TOEFL test at UIN Ar-Raniry and to explore students' perceptions of the perceived impact of formative evaluation in overcoming their difficulties in the listening-TOEFL test.

F. Research Terminologies

1. Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is an evaluation carried out while the learning process is ongoing to detect weaknesses and strengths so the student can enhance their competencies. According to Fulcher and Davidson (2012); Allal and Lopez (2005) viewed that teachers would use the assessment outcomes to offer feedback to students, highlighting the differences between their current performance and the desired "mastery" level, in addition, they would modify their teaching methods to better address the specific learning needs identified through the evaluation process. Formative evaluation in this research can be defined as a tool to evaluate a student with the aim of getting information about their learning progress, weaknesses and strengths, and providing the feedback that can help them in enhancing their competencies.

2. Students' difficulties

Sardiman defined that students are a group of people who come to school to learn a type of education or a group of people who place a central position in the

teaching and learning process (Sardiman, 2019). According to Merriam Webster online dictionary, difficulty is defined as the quality of something that makes hard to do. It can be understood that student difficulties are when a group of people find something not easy to do and understand.

3. *TOEFL test.*

The TOEFL, which stands for “Test of English as a Foreign Language,” is used to measure the English proficiency of foreign language learners (Brown, 2004). The TOEFL is also widely used by many formal institutions as a primary instrument for making admission decisions (Jamieson et al., 2000). The TOEFL ITP is divided into three main sections, one of which is the Listening Comprehension section. During this section, students listen to both monologues and dialogues; after listening, they must answer questions based on what the speakers have stated or implied. It is crucial for students to pay close attention, as the audio is only played once and will not be repeated.

