

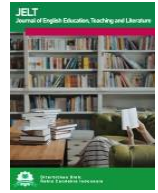


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Education Article

THE IMPACT OF ACCENT SECOND LANGUAGE ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Aisyah Amru¹, Nasywa Sakinah², Gumarpi Rahis Pasaribu³

¹ *State Islamic University of North Sumatera, Medan, Indonesia*

² *State Islamic University of North Sumatera, Medan, Indonesia*

³ *STIT Al-Ittihadiyah Labuhanbatu Utara, Aek Kanopan, Indonesia*

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CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail:

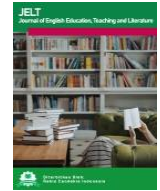
1. amruaisyah@gmail.com
2. sakinahnasywa@gmail.com
3. gumarpi19@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the impact of accent on a second language and the impact of accent on second language listening comprehension. Utilizing an experimental approach, we collected data from the group of participants exposed to different accents in the context of teaching English as a second language. Data analysis methods involved evaluating listening comprehension through tests and interviews. The results indicate that specific accents can influence the level of listening comprehension, with significant implications for second language teaching and curriculum material development.

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INTRODUCTION

The word "listening" has numerous definitions. According to Chastain (1971) in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), listening comprehension aims to understand language automatically and at a typical pace. According to Hamouda (2013), the ability to listen well is crucial for obtaining intelligible information. If there is no input, learning will not happen. According to Pourhosein Gilakjani and Mohammadreza Ahmadi (2011) in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), listening is a crucial part of communication. Speaking, reading, writing, and listening are the four primary areas of communication abilities, and listening is the most crucial of them all, according to Pourhosein Gilakjani and Seyedeh Masoumeh Ahmadi (2011) in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016). According to Goss (1982) in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), when it comes to listening comprehension, listeners attempt to make sense of the information they hear from the listening source.

Because listening is a complex process that involves a variety of factors like "familiarity and degree of exposure, attitude, and stereotyping," research on the relationship between a speaker's accent and listening comprehension has yielded inconsistent and inconclusive results. (Major et al., 2002 in Yildiz, 2017 & Pasaribu, 2023). It provides access to more media, improves the discussion on current issues, and opens opportunities to employment opportunities in the global economy. English is certainly the language that is used most frequently worldwide right now. This research follows Ockey and French's (2016, p. 695) construct definition of accent, which defines it as "the level to which a person's speech patterns are perceived to differ from the local variety, and the degree to which this difference is believed to impact listeners who are familiar with the local variety's comprehension." To remain competitive, they must be able to perform well in subjects of scientific and technological expertise, international trade, multinational industrial companies, and diplomacy. They must contribute to the world's knowledge base and be creative. To accomplish these objectives, they must be able to communicate in English, the most widely used language.

On the one hand, there has been an effort to include L1 accent variations in the listening sections of high-stakes English tests (Abeywickrama, 2013; Harding, 2012; Ockey & French, 2016; Ockey, Papageorgiou; French, 2016; Pasaribu, 2023). The 505 million or so non-native English speakers (OMICS International) across the world expose NNEs to a

large selection of accents in their regular exchanges.2013), a sizable number of native English speakers (NESs) and nonnative. An increasing amount of evidence indicates that, although spoken word recognition may seem easy on the subjective level, it requires the activation of cognitive resources, also known as listening effort—the effort that a listener makes to finish a listening task (see Downs, 1982; Pichora-Fuller et al., 2016; Junaidi et.al 2023).

The most common way to generate listening effort in laboratory settings is to increase the level of background noise, although other circumstances or listener characteristics—like vocoded speech—may also have this effect (Winn et al., 2015). However, the present investigation is different in that it uses comprehensible speech and focuses listening effort above intelligibility; earlier studies have often utilized speech materials with varying degrees of intelligibility (refer to Porretta & Tucker, 2019). It's been suggested that listening represents an important part of the time spent communicating (Purwanto, D et al. 2021).

The two variants known as "British English" (BE) and "American English" (AE) continue to top the list of pronunciation models, even though there are many native and non-native speaker accents available (e.g., Henderson et al. 2012; Moyer 2013). Many case studies have looked into this matter in great detail to show how using more common platforms, particularly about accents, can inspire a love of learning through interacting methods and, most importantly, improve one's capacity for listening to English.

High-stakes English exams have historically given preference to conventionally acceptable English dialects like British and, more recently, American English. But as World Englishes (WE) have grown in popularity, many academics have recognized the advantages of incorporating historically nonstandard forms of the language into international English evaluations, even as they work to determine the most equitable and responsible method to do so (Kang, O et al., 2020) Incorporating native and nonnative English varieties could lead to test bias if done without an experimentally established technique (Elder & Harding, 2008; Ockey & French, 2016; Ockey & Wagner, 2018).

According to Brown (2014), there seem to be significant variations in scores depending on the accents used in listening passages. However, greater research will allow for the responsible and equitable application of this English method to language teaching when creating standardized competency exams (Brown, 2014). The State Islamic University of North Sumatera's first-semester English language education students were the study's population target because they participated in a course that examined the way children were learning the language. Students were given questionnaires by the authors to investigate how a second language accent impacts listening comprehension.

The study's findings will show the potency of accents to improve listening skills, and as a result, students will be able to use this research to finally use interesting and liked methods that are close to and recognize accents as effective learning tools. Students at universities who can provide feedback on the potential of accent-specific, language learning strategies as a teaching tool for teachers or learners.

METHOD

The present study was conducted at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera's first-semester English language education. The case study method and qualitative research design will be used in this study by the researchers with ten participants such as six female, and four male. With every day that goes by, people's approach to science and the methodical control of scientific processes improves, and curiosity has proven to be useful in research (Şahin, Uysal, Saraç, & Gündoğdu, 2019). Qualitative research focuses on the experiences of those involved in the events and their effects (Teherani, A. Et al, 2015). One of the qualitative research designs, the phenomenological design, was followed in the conduct of the study.

The semi-structured interview is crucial for providing the interview with a platform for self-expression and for obtaining comprehensive details on the topic under investigation (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). Bilgin (2014) states that the objective of this analysis is to eliminate subjective influences in interpretation while making comments based on the objects observed and stated in messages. The data was evaluated using a tool for qualitative data analysis. The study made use of this analysis application since it makes data coding and storage easier and facilitates analysis (Ezer, F & Aksut, S. 2021). The goal of qualitative research is to examine and analyze a particular aspect of social life. Qualitative research is any study that employs a qualitative approach to comprehend how people or cultures perceive and experience a given topic (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Reporting comprehensively the data collected as a result of the study and explaining how the researchers found the results in detail are among the criteria that are considered important for ensuring validity in qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Similarly, graduate students in Som's (2017) study had the opinion that the researcher should be proficient in communicating during the qualitative research phase.

In the field of education, qualitative research is particularly useful when attempting to:

- Provide comprehensive implementation details;
- Determine the nuances of subjective understanding that motivate different participants in a setting; and
- Recognize and comprehend changes over time.

Human opinion and social behavior are situationally and locally specific. Even when something appears to be identical on the surface, a venue, event, or point of view may not be the same in type (Kelly, G. 2023) Therefore, it should come as no surprise that editorials and reviews on qualitative methods emphasize the use of innovative or unconventional methods as a useful tactic for producing publications with a high impact (Bartunek, Rynes, & Ireland, 2006; Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011; Elsbach & Kramer, 2016; L^e & Schmid, 2019). The population was formed by UINSU first-semester English Language Education students, and the sample consisted of ten students attending regular classes. The study was carried out over one day, on Friday, 17 November 2023.

The following eight questions made up the data collection process:

1. How frequently do you participate in events where you have to listen in your second language?
2. How does it make you feel, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is very comfortable and 1 is very uncomfortable, to hear someone speaking your second language with an accent?
3. Has a strong accent ever made it difficult for you to understand what is being said?
4. How much do you think accents affect how easy it is to understand a second language overall?
5. In your second language, which accents do you find most difficult to understand?
6. Which techniques do you usually employ to get better at understanding people with different accents when they speak?
7. Do you believe that learners of second languages could benefit from specific instruction on identifying between different accents?
8. How much do you believe cultural differences affect your ability to identify accents in the language you speak as a second language?

Following that, the researcher used the interview research to analyze the data. The research data were examined using the sample's experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The researchers describe and go over the data from this study using an interview-based " The Impact of Accent Second Language On Listening Comprehension " in this outcome. The ten students' outcomes are listed below:

Table 1. Result of the interview

Question	1. How frequently do you participate in events where you have to listen in your second language?
Answers	Rarely: 3, Occasionally: 2, Frequently: 3, and Very Frequently: 2
Question	2. How does it make you feel, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is very comfortable and 1 is very uncomfortable, to hear someone speaking your second language with an accent?
Answers	Scale of 1: -, Scale of 2: 1, Scale of 3: 6, Scale of 4: 2, Scale of 5: 1
Question	3. Has a strong accent ever made it difficult for you to understand what is being said?
Answers	Yes: 8, No: 2
Question	4. How much do you think accents affect how easy it is to understand a second language overall?
Answers	Strongly agree: 2, Agree: 5, Natural: 3, Disagree: -
Question	5. In your second language, which accents do you find most difficult to understand?
Answers	Regional accents: 4, Non-native speaker accents: 2, Variation with standard accents: 1, Other: 3
Question	6. Which techniques do you usually employ to get better at understanding people with different accents when they speak?
Answers	Using active listening techniques: 7, Text-based: 3, Other: -, Adding variation: -
Question	7. Do you believe that learners of second languages could benefit from specific instruction on

	identifying between different accents?
Answers	Yes: 10, No:-, Not sure:-
Question	8. How much do you believe cultural differences affect your ability to identify accents in the language you speak as a second language?
Answers	Low: -, Moderate: 6, Hight: 4

One of the four fundamental practical skills for communicating in English, along with reading, writing, and speaking, is listening (Ghafar, et al, 2023) The results of the interview mentioned above led the researchers to the conclusion that every research participant was aware of the accents study and knew how to use it, in addition to knowing that the goal was improving listening, To acquire a second language (L2) over one's lifetime, listening comprehension must be improved (Kajiura et al., 2021, p.1). This study tries to figure out the substantial benefit of having this skill because it can greatly increase one's achievement in other areas. One's performance in other areas could be significantly improved by this skill (Darti & Asmawati, 2017).

Table 1 provides an overview of the findings from the study on "The Impact of Accent in Second Language on Listening Comprehension," which was conducted through interviews. The distribution suggests a range of engagement levels, In general, the participants indicate a moderate level of comfort (Scale 3) when exposed to an accent in their second language which could affect how comfortable and familiar they are with different accents, Eight out of ten interviewees say they have trouble comprehending people with challenging accents Because the students are powerless to control the level at which the teacher speaks, A limited vocabulary and lexicon, an inability to recognize signals or cues, a slow rate of analysis of what is heard, difficulty focusing, and established learning patterns that do not promote the development of listening skills are some of the major obstacles that can arise when learning the skill. Although these obstacles are surmountable, they may complicate the process of acquiring talent (El-Dali, 2017; Kasriyati, 2019; Syaifullah, 2019).

This illustrates the possible difficulties that accents may present when learning a second language. According to Nadig (2013), listening comprehension involves a range of tasks, such as understanding spoken language and analyzing auditory information. One could say that understanding what they have heard qualifies. This includes, for instance, being aware of the meaning of particular words, comprehending sentence structure, and listening to how others speak. The majority of participants accept that accents affect how

simple it is to comprehend a second language, Excellent listening is influenced by many factors, including enthusiasm, self-control, and the right use of previous understanding, according to the findings of a qualitative study. Effective listening also involves using a variety of techniques, being able to switch up your approach when necessary, and using various methods (Abdalhamid, 2012 in Ghafar, et al, 2023) Notable Problems with Listening comprehension.

According to research results given by Azmi Bingol, Celik, Yildiz, and Tugrul Mart (2014), students can face a variety of challenges when trying to assimilate the knowledge they have been given. Raising awareness of these problems and actively seeking out solutions are the goals. This supports the general notion that comprehension can be impacted by accents. The most frequently mentioned challenge is regional accents, highlighting the significance of taking regional variations in accent comprehension into effect. Examining how particular phonemic and suprasegmental features of the speech signal may affect a listener's capacity to correctly map the acoustic-phonetic signal onto words in their lexicon is made possible by the study of intelligibility across various accents (e.g., Adank et al. 2009; Bent et al. 2016, 2021; Clopper and Bradlow 2008; Floccia et al. 2009 in Bent et al, 2023). Theories and frameworks of speech adaptation and listening effort, like the Framework for Understanding Effortful Listening (Pichora-Fuller et al. 2016), the Ease of Language Understanding model (Rönnberg et al. 2013), and the Ideal Adaptor Framework (Kleinschmidt and Jaeger 2015), place a strong emphasis on the perception of less-familiar accents.

The participant's commitment to improving their comprehension of different accents can be observed in the popularity of active listening strategies, According to recent studies (e.g., Attamimi & Chittick, 2018), learners' views toward and interest in using English as a global contact language are positively impacted by exposure to varied accents. Every participant feels that language learners who are learning a second language would gain from specialized training in accent recognition, It also indicates an understanding of the significance of accent understanding in language learning. Four out of ten participants, or an important have in common, feel that cultural variations have a significant impact on their ability to distinguish accents. This demonstrates how accent perception is influenced by both language and culture.

The researcher gave the participants some videos about American accents and British accents.

Table 2. Result of the listening interview

American accents	British accents
Candy /'kændi/	Sweets /swi:ts/
Pants /pænts/	Trousers /'traʊ.zəz/

Apartment /ə'pɑ:tmənt/	Flat /flæt/
Bar /bɑ: /	Pub /pʌb/
Trash can /træʃ kæn/	Bin /bɪn/

The results many of the participants chose American accents because it is easier than the British language and they prefer understanding and easier for memorizing American accents to British accents. According to Harmer (2007, p. 134 in Syrine 2022), listening texts serve as good models for pronunciation; that is, students get better at both understanding and speaking speech when they listen to more. It is important to keep in mind that effective listening is just as important to successful spoken communication as speaking itself."

Discussion

The study's emphasis on accents and its objective of enhancing second-language learners' listening comprehension was known to the participants. The research highlights listening comprehension as a critical basic skill for learning a second language and highlights it as a basic ability for communicating in English. When exposed to accents in their second language, the participants generally expressed a moderate level of comfort (Scale 3). Of the participants, eight out of ten said they had trouble understanding people with difficult accents. The text lists a number of challenges to developing listening skills, such as not being able to control the teacher's speaking speed, having a small vocabulary, and having trouble identifying cues.

Participants agree that accents impact how easy it is to understand a second language, and they identify accents as potential listening comprehension challenges. A few key components of effective listening are energy, limitation, making proper use of previous understanding, and employing a number of strategies. Regional accents are highlighted as a significant challenge, emphasizing the importance of considering regional variations in accent comprehension. Active listening strategies are popular among participants for improving comprehension of different accents. The fact that four out of ten participants think that cultural differences significantly affect their ability to tell apart accents shows how closely related language and culture are.

Videos about American and British accents were shown to the participants, and the text mentions that many of them thought American accents were easier to understand and preferred them to British accents. According to the study, students may benefit from specialized training in distinguishing between different pronunciations. The value of active listening in oral communication as well as the advantages of exposure to a number of accents for learners' attitudes toward using English as a global language of communication. The text makes reference to Harmer's theory, which holds that when students listen more, their comprehension and speaking abilities improve because listening texts provide

excellent models for pronunciation. The preference for American accents over British accents among the participants requests intriguing issues concerning exposure and familiarity in relation to preferences for language learning and accent comprehension. Overall, the text emphasizes the importance of accents in language acquisition as well as the different difficulties and techniques related to listening comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The State Islamic University of North Sumatra's English language learners were the subject of the study, which investigated the effect of accents on second language listening comprehension. The results show that accents have a significant effect on listening comprehension, with regional accents being especially difficult to understand. The study highlights the importance of listening comprehension in learning a language and developing skills in communication. When exposed to accents in their second language, the participants typically showed a reasonable level of comfort; however, eight out of ten said they had trouble comprehending people with problematic accents. This challenge was ascribed to elements including the teacher's uncontrollable speaking pace, a small vocabulary, and trouble recognizing cues.

Participants acknowledged that accents can make it difficult to grasp a second language and that they have an effect on language comprehension in general. Regional dialects were cited as a major obstacle, highlighting the necessity of taking regional variances in accent comprehension into account. Participants found that using active listening techniques helped them better understand people with diverse accents. According to the study, students might gain from receiving specific instruction in accent recognition. Furthermore, participants' preference for American accents over British accents raises interesting considerations about exposure, familiarity, and preferences for accent comprehension and language learning.

The findings of the study highlight how important it is to take accent variances into account when developing curricula and teaching second languages. It emphasizes how important it is for teachers to take into account local dialects and include customized instruction to improve students' ability to recognize accents. All things considered, the study makes a significant contribution to the subject of second language learning by highlighting the influence of accents on listening comprehension abilities.

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