ENHANCING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN EXTENSIVE LISTENING CLASS THROUGH THE LISTENING LOGS

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Abstract:
Mastering listening skill has been a great burden for intermediate to upper-intermediate students in Indonesian EFL context. The absence of real life exposures to native speakers of English strengthens student's reluctance to frequently practice listening to English. Therefore, this paper will propose the listening logs applied in an extensive listening class to enhance student's autonomy in improving their listening skill. The article will begin by highlighting some challenges faced by students in Listening class and some possible strategies to deal with them will be presented further. Later, relevant theories on extensive listening and learner autonomy will be discussed. Next, the author will introduce the listening logs followed by the procedures on how this is planned, implemented and evaluated. This paper offers an alternative for teachers to promote students' in and out of class learning regarding their own pace and interest in extensive listening practice.

Keywords: *Listening log, extensive listening, learner autonomy*

Of the four language skills, listening is often regarded as the most difficult one especially in a proficiency test or real conversation due to the absence of students' control in it. It is impossible for students to stop the

audio during the listening test. Also, students may be reluctant to interrupt someone who is speaking to them while they do not understand their words. Students may have chance to add or reduce their time in practicing reading, speaking, or writing skills according to their pace. However, this would never happen for listening as the materials they listen to are spoken texts which nature is fast, variable, blurry boundaries, and processed in real time (Renandya &Farrell, 2011). Therefore, various problems could be found by students when they encounter materials in listening, either in the class when they learn with teachers or outside the class when they learn by themselves.

Challenges and Strategies in Listening Process

Further, Zeng (as cited in Renandya &Farrell, 2011) listed 10 listening problems faced by non-native English learners. The problems include: speaking rate that the speakers in the materials speak too fast, distraction that students' concentration in listening can be easily distracted, unrecognizable words that students may not be able to recognize words they actually have already known, new vocabulary that students could find words they have never heard before and they do not have the opportunity to look up their dictionary, missing subsequent input that students can only understand parts of the listening materials, feeling nervous, sentence complexity that complex sentences can lead to students' misunderstanding, students' lack of background knowledge of the topic spoken, anxiety and frustration while facing difficulty on understanding the materials, and unfamiliar pronunciation. These problems could be the reason why students feel reluctant to deal with listening materials in or outside their classes.

Considering the listening problems encountered by EFL students, strategies for listening practice are important to be applied. There are some strategies students need to be aware of yet one essential strategy is on students' perception (Renandya &Farrell, 2011). Students, especially for beginners, could benefit from thinking positively on the listening materials. Having positive attitude towards things they are about to listen to gives students confidence and they would not get easily frustrated when they meet one or

more problems listed above. In addition, positive thinking can help students enjoy and feel relax in having listening to English activities.

In addition to the perception strategy in listening, Buck (in Richards, 2008) mentions two other listening strategies, such as Cognitive strategies and Metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies include activities in three processes: understanding the texts, storing information obtained from the texts, and retrieval process which means to make accessible output. Meanwhile, Metacognitive strategies consist of calculating the situation before listening to prepare and make predictions on possible problems students may meet, observing possible effective act while listening, doing self-evaluating by determining possible effective act after listening, and doing self-testing to determine the strength and weakness in doing the listening task.

Nation & Newton (2009) add two other listening strategies called Communication strategies and Learning strategies to encounter problems in listening such as failure to notice language forms and to prepare on comprehending the upcoming information. In the first strategy, students need to practice activities to help their understanding by, for instance, predicting information before engaging in the listening task, selecting to some parts while doing the task, and learning to make polite interruption, etc. Secondly, in learning strategies, students can try to recognize language patterns when they do independent listening such as by negotiating and listening to certain parts as main focus. The two strategies should be practiced regularly to assist confidence in engaging in listening task.

Those strategies above could be applied for listening practice. However, mastering strategies only is not enough for better listener without practicing listening to a great amount of a wide range of listening materials because 'fast automatic processing of spoken language is developed through a lot of listening practice' (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). Therefore, regular listening practice could be the key to master listening skill. This practice is discussed below as extensive listening.

Extensive Listening

Some definitions on Extensive Listening (EL) are given by several experts. Waring (2008) defines EL as listening fluently to many understandable text of the target language. Later, Renandya and Farrell (2011) state that EL is any kind of listening activities to a lot of listening materials whether teacher-directed or self-directed activities, and inside or outside classroom activities that students enjoy and understand easily. The two characteristics of EL are 'comprehensible' and 'enjoyable listening input'. This is in line to Gilliland (2015) who describes EL as an engagement to great quantities of listening materials. Furthermore, Rost (2002) also mentions EL as overall understanding for longer listening materials.

From these EL definitions, it can be summarized that EL is naturally in-or-out-of class enjoyable listening activities to long or many audio or audiovisual texts with or without teachers' instruction. EL could be applied as in-class activity such as in Extensive Listening course which is included in the tertiary level curriculum. However, due to time limitation, the EL course may require students more times to listen to numbers of texts outside the class. In addition, English learners could choose the text based on their interest so that they could easily enjoy listening based on their own pace even if they are not directed by teachers. Students should regard listening as leisure activities on which they can follow easily without too much looking up their dictionary.

Related to listening activities in EL that could be done even without teacher's attendance, students' learning autonomy is highly promoted. Students could control and involve in their own learning activities for greater motivation (Little, 1991; Kemp, 2010) and this is one characteristic of Learner Autonomy. What is the definition of learning autonomy? Does it mean that students have to learn by themselves in isolation? the following paragraphs will discuss more on learner autonomy.
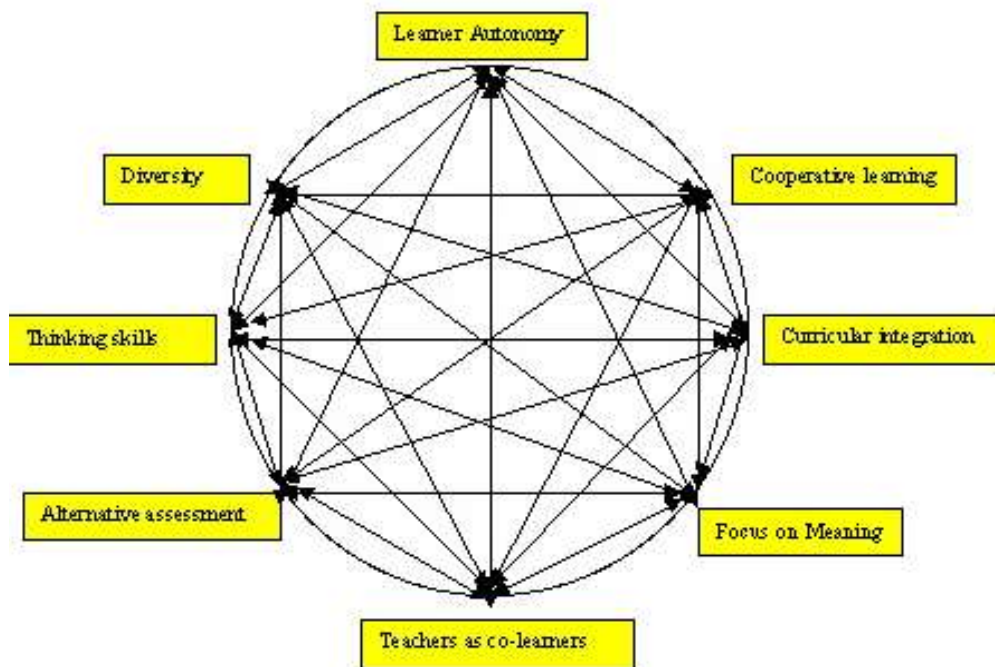
Learner Autonomy

In the beginning of 1980s, learner autonomy concept was mostly related to adult education and later appeared to be about learners doing activities not only on their own but also for themselves (Little, 2007). Autonomous learning does not mean that someone is learning alone without anyone else involved, but more about someone's responsibility for his or her own success in learning, especially in learning second or foreign languages. Little (2007) defines autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning'. Thus, the involvement of teachers and peers may support learner autonomy as long as the learner has freedom on their own learning style (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001). Jacobs and Farrell (2001) argue that the vital role in autonomous learning is learner's intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the teacher is not fully in charge of their students' learning, since each student has their own responsibility.

Furthermore, Benson (2011), in the introduction of his book, mentions that autonomy is an essential condition to be successful language learners. Benson (2011) further states that learner autonomy is not just about isolation in learning without a teacher or learning outside the classroom. Autonomy refers to the learner's broad approach to the learning process, rather than to a particular mode of teaching or learning. In addition, Little (2007) argues that autonomy in learning includes interaction process resulted in teachers giving more chances to the learners to control their learning process and contents. This shows that learner autonomy is interrelated to other elements in language teaching and learning.

The relationship of learner autonomy and other elements can be seen in Jacobs & Farrell (2001) eight changes within the paradigm shift in second language learning. The eight changes include learner autonomy, cooperative learning, diversity, curricular integration, thinking skill, focus on learning, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners. The figure below shows that these eight changes are interrelated in second language learning. Any ends of the paradigms are related to each other. This means that to be able to

successfully implement one point of the eight points will depend on whether the implementation of others is successful or not.

Figure 1. eight changes in second language teaching (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001)

Jacobs & Farrell (2001) contends that learner autonomy in the figure is obviously connected to the whole paradigm shift, since it focuses more on learners than teacher in the process of learning. Hence, learners can be motivated to manage their own second language learning and then consider learning as part of their life. It further can be seen that successful implementation of learner autonomy impacts on the successful implementation of other seven changes in the paradigm.

Learner autonomy must also be an important element in designing a language program. Cotterall (2000) proposes five principles to consider in designing intensive language program which promote Learner Autonomy. The five principles include, first, the course reflects learners' goals in its language, tasks, and strategies; second, the course tasks are explicitly linked to a

simplified model of the language learning process; third, the course tasks either replicate real-world communicative tasks or provide; fourth, the course incorporates discussion and practice with strategies known to facilitate task performance; the last, the course promotes reflection on learning.

In addition, Learner Autonomy today can also benefit from the advanced of Technology as Warschauer & Liaw (2011) state that adult learners can improve their language skills autonomously by using new technologies including new software and hardware. Learners can obtain listening materials on plenty new free language learning programs and applications in the internet and they can also have more sophisticated smartphones and computers. One example of study on learner autonomy with the use of the advanced of technology is done by Chick (2014). Chik (2014) did exploratory research studying Chinese gamers practice autonomy learning within their community through gameplay. Playing online game was used as both leisure and learning practices. The results showed that one key to facilitate second language/ L2 learning by using L2 online gaming is the autonomy. Therefore, learner autonomy and technology can be interrelated, too.

The Listening logs: its plan, implementation, and evaluation

One alternative to teach listening is by using listening logs. The listening log is in fact another name for listener's diary or can also be called a reflective journal which is flexible for out-of-class activity (Kemp, 2010; Gilliland, 2015). As a diary, the contents of listening log are the reports from students' daily or weekly activities related to listening to English. As a reflection, the reports are not only telling the sequence of events happened in listening activities, but also explaining students' feeling and comments related to the activities. Furthermore, since the listening logs contain students' personal activities and reflection, so the contents are not restricted to certain rules and students have freedom to choose any listening activity at any time they are interested in.

There are two extensive listening practices using the listening logs. First is in Leicester University. 42 students with intermediate to near native

level of English were involved and they kept recording five to six listening experiences with Native Speakers of English every week and reflected on the experience (Kemp, 2010). The logs were written for eight weeks which include the time, place, and reflection on each activity. The logs were checked and given feedbacks by the tutor regularly. Further, Kemp (2010) claims that students who kept the logs were not only enjoyed the activity, but also develop their language competence and schemata based on their interests. Hence, she believes that listening log is affective to motivate students' learner autonomy.

The second practice is at a California University. International students, who in fact had high scores in TOEFL, had to document their real experience contacted with live and recorded listening texts, such as following museum tour and watching drama on television, in the form of listening logs. They were assigned to have five entries for every four weeks (Gilliland, 2015). Gilliland (2015) asked students who involved in writing the logs to participate in a survey, and the results showed that some students believed that after keeping the logs, they had improved their listening and critical thinking skills.

The Listening logs for Indonesian EFL Context

After reviewing the theories and practices on the listening logs, the writer wants to share her experience in applying the listening logs in her extensive listening class. The listening log was chosen due to some challenges the writer met including: the context of English as Foreign language that students had hardly ever practice listening to English on the daily basis, students seemed to have low motivation in learning listening which could be caused by the first challenge, and students were encouraged to have more access to technology. Then discussion of the listening log will include its planning, implementation, and evaluation as follows.

Planning the listening log activity

In planning the listening logs for extensive listening class, the writer focused on seven principles of extensive listening from some experts appropriate to the implementation of the logs. The principles are that: language learners need to experience a various authentic listening materials,

language learners select listening materials based on their interests, language learners should have easy listening texts which are at "i minus 1" level or one level below their ability to achieve maximum comprehension, language learners should listen regularly, language learners should listen to the same texts for more than once, language learners should develop their strategy to comprehend the listening texts, and language learners may or may not use subtitles or transcription while listening to the texts (Gilliland, 2015; Chang &Millett, 2014; Waring, 2008; Hapsari & Ratri, 2014; Astika, 2015).

The principles above then became the basis of the course objectives of the extensive listening class. The learning objectives are students are able: to understand various types of oral texts in English using audio and audio-visual aids; to select and understand various types of oral texts in English using audio and audio-visual aids; to develop their learning autonomy to understand various types of oral texts in English using audio and audio-visual aids; and to self-reflect their understanding, both written and spoken, on various types of oral texts in English using audio and audio-visual aids.

Implementing the listening log activity

The implementation of the listening logs involved in-class and out-of-class activities. The classroom activity was aimed to introduce the listening log by practicing on watching a video in the class, discussing on how to make the summary of and response to the video, suggesting listening strategies students need to be aware of to understand the texts, and focusing on new expressions and vocabulary students find. The teacher provided the transcription of the video to assist students' understanding. In this in-class activity, the teacher gave guidance to students for their own listening outside the class or at home.

In addition to the activity above, each student was assigned to keep a listening log or diary and make at least five entries per week with approximately 30 minutes /day listening to English outside the class. Students are also encouraged to not only listen to the text, but also reading the written transcription of the text if available. The elements of the entry

are brief summary of the listening texts such as songs, videos, movies, or audiobooks; personal response to the texts whether it is easy to understand, or any moral values can be learnt, any prior knowledge of the text; personal reflection on the text including whether the text is useful, enjoyable, or not, and strategies used to understand the text; lexical items found in the texts, such as new vocabulary, phrases or idiomatic expression.

After writing the listening report in their diary, every week as part of in-class activity, each student was asked to tell their experience writing on their logs to a classmate who was sitting next to them, called as a listening buddy. Students had to speak up one of their interesting entry for about 2 minutes. Later, the other student did the same thing at the same duration to their listening buddy. After that, the teacher called some students randomly to retell their friend's listening experience in front of the class. This activity was then followed by another in-class activity guided by the teacher mentioned previously.

Evaluating the listening log activity

The evaluation of the listening activities consisted of listening log weekly submission containing the entry elements, individual feedback from the teacher written in the logs, listening buddy activity which encouraged each student to express their understanding to the text and also motivated them to experience listening to more interesting texts, and for the assessment, the teacher gave both written and oral tests. In the written test, students had to listen to IELTS listening test, on which students needed to answer 40 questions in 30- 40 minutes. Students also listened to the same test before applying the listening logs. Meanwhile, the oral test was one on one demonstration with the teacher on the logs measured using a rubric covering their knowledge on the entry, and fluency and accuracy of the demonstration.

At the end of the course, students were asked to fill questionnaires on their experience of writing the listening logs and most of them reported that they enjoyed it, and they were motivated to listen to more texts in the future.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, listening logs can be great alternative for teaching listening for both adults and young English learners with some adaptations regarding the ages, level of language ability, and interests (Kemp, 2010). Some obstacles that could be encountered in implementing listening logs are time, control, and material lists. The teacher may have to spend longer time to check the logs and later give written and spoken feedbacks, especially for classes with greater numbers of students. In addition, it could be difficult for the teacher to make sure whether students really watch or listen to the listening materials or not, since they do not provide evidence other than the reports. Thus, students' honesty is important. Furthermore, the teacher needs to prepare lists on suggested materials because it may be not easy for some students to choose materials suitable for them.

Some relevant websites suggested for abundant free listening materials are behind the news.at www.abc.net.au/btn, Audio books.at www.storynory.com, TED presentation at www.ted.com, British Council at www.learnenglish.britishcouncil.org, and more than 1000 materials for both reading and listening texts at https://www.er-central.com/.

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