STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ACCENTS OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN INTERACTIVE LISTENING AND EXTENSIVE SPEAKING CLASS

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were (I) to know the students' perceptions on the accents of non-native English speakers in the videos and (II) to identify the challenges in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers in Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking class. The writer used descriptive qualitative in this study. The participant of this study was all students in the third semester of Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking classes from English Education Study Program. The data were collected by giving the questionnaire to the participants, then analyzing them by using the formula of percentage calculation to be interpreted descriptively. The main finding showed that most of the students in Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking classes had a positive perception of the accent of non-native English speakers. They believed that understanding different accents could enrich their knowledge of English accents and improve their listening skills. The challenges and difficulties that students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers did not create a negative perception. They believed that listening to the non-native English accents is not easy because it was challenging for the difficulties in understanding them.

Keywords: perception, accent, listening skill, english native speakers, english non-native speakers.

Introduction

In this twenty-first century, the need for mastering English has become crucial for people in the world. The first reason for this is that English becomes the primary language used in global communication. Most of the modern technology and social network use English of a media in social communication. Secondly, most information now is written and delivered in English. Thus the need to master English is essential, both in speaking and listening. English in Indonesia is taught since in elementary schools. It becomes one of the compulsory subjects in junior and senior high schools. It is one of the five subjects that are tested at the *Ujian Nasional* (*UN*). It is taught as an integrated subject to develop the students' language competences. Thus, the speaking ability in English is essential because it enables students to interact with others.

In this globalization era, English is needed in every part of the world. The language learning process includes four skills. There are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. From those four skills, listening is the skill that will be discussed in this study. Nunan (1998, p. 199) stated that "for most people, being capable of understanding the second language means being able to speak and write in that language, while the listening skill is considered as a secondary skill". However, listening is assumed greater importance in the foreign language

classroom. To communicate with other people from other countries, we need one language that use to communicate, that is English.

Because of the varieties of language, people who do not speak English as their first language will have particular accent depending on where they come from, in which community they live, with whom they talk and what language they use.

According to Handout (2004, p. 4) accent is "a certain form of a language spoken by a subgroup of speakers of that language which defined by phonological features". Cause of accent, there will be some problems in communication by using English. The accent might cause some effects for English foreign learners, whether as speakers or listeners. For the learners who have a particular accent, learning English is not easy, because accent will influence the way they speak, pronounce the word, and also produce the sound. Based on an oxford dictionary "Accent is a distinctive way of pronuncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class". It means that accent appears by some factors like country, area, community, culture and others. In other definition, it means a distinct emphasis given to syllable stress or pitch. An accent can be caused by the place, culture, attitude, and the varieties of language.

Then, people who do not speak as their first language will have a specific accent depending on where they come from. The different accents might cause the speeches difficult to be understood by others. Ur (1984) claimed that "the listeners try to deal with different accents at first by claiming the second speaker's accent is somehow inferior or wrong"(p. 20). However, understanding different accents are essential for the students' future if they are involved in the real life. Ur also added that pronouncer who have some experience in listening and understanding a number of different accents are more likely to be successfull than those who have only heard one or two (p. 20). Based on the researcher problem here, knowing how the students' perceptions on the accent of non-native English speakers and the challenges that the students identify in lisening to the accents of non-native English speakers in the videos are the problem investigated in this study.

Literature Review
Perception

The primary component in understanding why people behave the way they do is called perception. Perception is described as how someone perceived something on some particular matters. Qiong (2017) in his article defines perception from philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science as "the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information" (p. 18). The students' perceptions of listening activity in Interactive Listening and Extensive Listening class could be positive or negative. One factor that influences someone's perceptions is motivation. Cegala (1981), Daly, and McCroskey (1984) as cited in Brownell (1996, p. 50) state that "motivation is the key to concentration and accurate interpretation in any activity". Then, when the students are motivated to express their effort and energy to the listening activity, they have a good perception and improve their listening skills. On the other hand, the students who will not have a good perception if they are not motivated to express their effort to the listening activity.

Further out mean, Valenzi and Hodgetts (1985, p. 85) also stated that

perception is the way stimuli are selected and grouped by a person so that they could be meaningfuly interpreted. In other words, it was a person's view of reality. Many factors influence someone's perception of something. Those factors make the perception different among others. The following are the factors influencing perception, according to Altman et al. (1985, p. 86).

George and Jones (2005, p. 105) claimed that "perception is defined as the process by which individuals select, organize, interpret the input from their senses (vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) to give meaning to the world around them". In other words, perception in this study is the students' perception of the accent of non-native English speakers in Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking class.

Accent

Accent refers to "the aspects of 'pronunciation' of prominence, or both" (Wales, 2001, p. 2). In this study, an accent is a particular form of a language spoken by a subgroup of speakers of that language that identifies the speakers' place of origin regionally.

Listening Skill

Listening is one of the four skills in language learning. Nunan (1998, p. 1) believes that "listening skill in language learning". Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. The objective of language learning is to obtain when it is started with listening skill. Listening skill is an essential skill because it is crucial to the students' success in the studies, career, or even relationship. Futher, Rost (1994) points out that "listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learners. Without understanding at the right level, learners cannot begin language learning (as cited in Nunan, p. 200).

When the students have a good listening skill, it means that they could get information and apply it effectively. Students also spend most of the time in listening activity when they listen to the lecturer explaining the lesson. Thus, if the students could listen better to the lectures of speaking, they could take important information, and the learning objectives can be obtained.

Methodology
Research Method

The researcher used descriptive qualitative in this study. The data in this research were described descriptively. Creswell (2012) states that "descriptive study attempts to describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, service, programme systematically or provides information about, say, the living conditions of a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue" (p. 25). The statement above shows that descriptive qualitative methods is used to interpret the result of the data analyzed.

Research Participants

This research was conducted in the third semester. The participants of this research were students of Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking from English Education Study Program at *one of the private universities in South Sumatera - Indonesia*. The total participants who filled the questionnaires were 42 students includes five males and thirty-seven females.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was the instrument in this study. It was ready-

made from Silalahi (2015). The questionnaire from Silalahi had been used for some researchers to find out the same related problems. Wallace (1998, p. 124) stated that "questionnaires are usually set in a very systematic way, and often be answered by reading the question, ticking responses and writing short answers". It is also supported by Kumar (2011), The closed-ended questionnaire was used to answer the two research questions.

The scale used in this study was Likert scale. There are four columns for each statement. They are 1) strongly agree (SA); 2) agree (A); 3) disagree (D); 4) strongly disagree (SD). There were fifteen questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were divided into two.

The technique of Analyzing Data

The raw data were calculated into a percentage.

The formula of percentage calculation is as follows:

$$P = \frac{\sum x}{\sum n} \times 100\%$$

In which:
P   : the percentage
$\sum x$: the number of students based on the gree of agreement,
$\sum n$: the number of all students.

Findings and Interpretations
Findings
Students' Perceptions of the Accents of Non-native English speakers

In the questionnaire, the statements one to six represented how the students perceived the English accent of the speakers. Through these statements, the researcher aimed to identify the importance of "a questionnaire is a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorder by respondents. In the questionnaire, respondents read the questions, interpret and then write down the answers" (p. 139).

The questionnaire was distributed to the 42 students of Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking class. understanding English accents. The statements in this category are represented as in table 1.

From the figure, it can be seen that all students perceived that an English accent had positive effect to the students' learning prcess. All of students in Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking believed that knowing various kinds of English accent could enrich the students' knowledge on English accents.

The fifth was about the students' belief on listening to the various English accent could improve their skill in listening.

The Challenges in Listening to the Accents of Non-native English Speakers

In the questionnaire, the second category was about the challenges that the students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers in their speaking. This category included statements from seven to fifteen. The researcher divided the challenges as represented in the following table 2.

From the result of the questionnaires, it could be concluded that most of the students agree or motivated to learn various kinds of English accents in Interactive Listening and Extensive Listening class though they still face the challenges that they might find through the activity.

Interpretations

In this section, the researcher discusses the data result to answer two research questions. The first was about how the students perceived the accents of non-native English speakers in the videos. The second was about the challenges that students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers. The discussions is presented as follows.

Students' Perceptions of the Accents of Non-native English Speakers

Based on the collected data, all of the students perceived the accents from the non-native English speakers positively. They had a positive perception on the accent of non-native English speakers. Thus, in this study, three aspects created the perception. They were the benefits of being introduced English accents, the factors that influenced perception, and the challenges. Based on the result, being introduced various kinds of English accents gave some benefits to the students.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Responses to the Students' Perception of the Accents of Non-native English Speakers

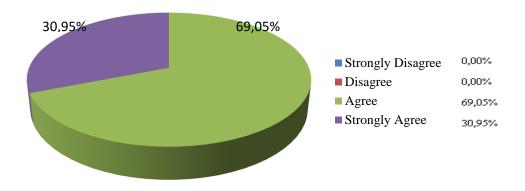| No	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongy Agree
1	Generally, I enjoy listening activities.	1	3	25	13
2	I learn various kinds of English accents in Interactive Listening and Extensive Listening class such as India, Spanish, British, Arab, and Finland.	-	1	27	14
3	I enjoy listening to the speech of non-native English speakers in Interactive Listening and Extensive Listening class.	1	9	31	1
4	I believe that knowing various kinds of English accents are important to enrich my knowledge of English accents.	-	-	29	13
5	I believe that listening to the various English accents could improve my listening skill.	-	-	24	18
6	I believe that introducing types of English accents is effective for my listening skills	-	1	29	9

Figure 1. Accent of Non-native Speakers could Enrich the Students' Knowledge

Table 2. The Distribution of the Responses on Challenges in Listening to the Accents of Non-native English Speakers

No	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
7	I felt challenged to listen to new accents of English.	-	1	11	30
8	I could catch or understand the main ideas in the recording of non-native English speakers.	12	24	4	2
9	I could understand the native speakers of English (such as American and British) better than non-native English speakers.	2	-	31	9
10	I could deal with the speed of speaking from the non-native English speakers.	4	25	11	2
11	The information organization delivered by non-native English speakers is better than the native speakers of English.	10	28	4	-
12	The accents of non-native speakers make the speech are hard to understand.	-	7	27	8
13	The clarity of pronunciation from the non-native speaker is sometimes hard to understand.	-	2	28	12
14	I am more motivated to learn native speakers of English accents than non-native English speakers accents.	-	3	21	18
15	I support the learning of listening activities on various English accents in the future for the students.	-	2	25	15

71,42%   2,38%   26,19%

Strongly Disagree   0,00%

Disagree   2,38%

Agree   26,19%
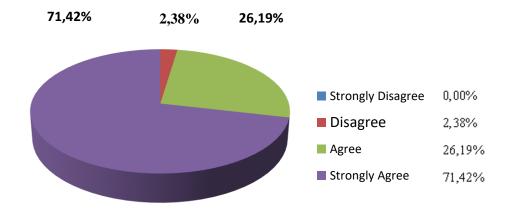
Strongly Agree   71,42%

Figure 2. How Students who Found the Accents of Non-Native English Speakers was Challenging

First of all, all students believed that learning various kinds of English accents could enrich their knowledge of English accents. Learning many accents around the world also gave benefits to the students for the sake of their future. It was proven by Ur (1984, p. 20), who claimed that "learners who had some experience in listening to and understanding several different accents were more likely to be able to work successfully with other ones than those who had only heard one or two. Thus, it was expected that students could also communicate with other people around the world who use English.

The second benefit was that understanding various kinds of English accents could improve students' listening skills. It was proven by statements six in the first category, where all students chose "agree". The students became more "sensitive" to many sounds of English pronunciation. When they heard the speakers mispronouncing the words

in English, the students practised to correct them. They thought that the non-native speakers‟ pronunciation is sometimes "wrong". Ur (1984, p. 20) also stated that the listeners tried to deal with different accents at first by claiming that the second speaker‟s accent was somehow inferior or "wrong". Therefore, by recognizing the mispronunciation words from the speakers, the students had practised their listening skills. The students can apply their listening skill in their daily life.

The second aspect was the factors that influenced perception. Factors that influenced students' perception were different from one student to the other students. In this study, the researcher used Altman, Valenzi, and Hodgetts' (1985) theory about factors that influence listening to explain this section. They were a selection of stimuli, organization of stimuli, and situation.

The first factor was the selection of stimuli. Selection of stimuli was the process in which one student focused on one thing better than others though there was distraction around him. On the other hand, in the finding of the closed-ended questionnaire showed that some students could prove that they were able to catch the main ideas, while they were recognizing the mispronunciation and still focus on the listening. It could be concluded that each person has different threshold levels.

The second factor was the organization of the stimuli. According to Altman et al., an organization of stimuli was the process of how a person managed the information in a meaningful way. Each student had a different ability to manage the information he or she heard and then formulated it into meaningful information. For example, one student was able arranging the data, selecting certain items and putting them together in a meaningful way.

The third factor was the situation. According to Altman et al., the situation was about how well a person adjusted his or her behaviour to a situation. For example, this material (non-native English speakers accents) was considered as something new for some students. The students who had accustomed to listening to non-native speakers' speeches achieved the speech easier than those who did not. Thus, this was how the students were able to adjust their ability to the situation.

The third aspect that created perception was the challenges. All students agreed that understanding different English accents were challenging. In this study, the researcher concluded that the challenges came from both the listeners as well as the speakers.

The Challenges in Listening to the Accents of Non-native English Speakers

Being introduced to new accents of English gave new challenges to students. These challenges influenced the students in perceiving the understanding of new English accents. Although all students perceived the new accents of English positively, it did not mean that all of them enjoyed listening to the speaking of those non-native English speakers. Some challenges came from the students themselves and also from the speakers.

The first challenge came from the students was motivation. The result from the questionnaire showed that not all students were motivated to learn the accents of non-native English speakers. Most of them were more motivated to learn native English. It was because they thought that they would use native English in the future. They thought that native English as the ideal or "standardized" one to be learnt. Therefore, most of the students were motivated to learn native English in case they would use them as the ideal one that gave many benefits for their future.

The second challenge was from the speakers of the videos. The researcher concluded that the challenges related to pronunciation, speed, information organization, stress, dialect, and rhythm from the speakers. Some students found the difficulties to deal with it, while the others did not.

However, the challenges and difficulties that students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers did not make them have a negative perception. They still supported to learn Interactive Listening and Extensive Speaking, because they believed that the material was useful to support their learning process in listening class.

Conclusion

This study aimed to answer two research questions. The first research question was about students' perceptions of the accents of the non-native English speakers. The second research question was about the challenges that students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers.

The students perceived the accents of non-native English speakers positively. They believed that understanding different accents could enrich their knowledge of English accents and improve their listening skills. The students believed that understanding various kinds of English accents was very beneficial and meaningful. They also believed that listening to the non-native English accents is not easy because sometimes listening to the non-native English accent was challenging them. The researcher also concluded that the challenges in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers related to the manner of speakers speak. In conclusion, being introduced to English accents was beneficial for students' listening skills. In the end, though some students found it challenging to understand the English accents, they still had positive perception because this material was meaningful for them.

In conclusion, how the students perceive the accent of non-native speakers was answered by most of the students had positive perceptions on the accents of non-native English speakers. The advantages that they get from understanding various kinds of English accents are:
1. The students could enrich their knowledge of English accents.
2. The students could get a better understanding of knowing various kinds of English accents.
3. The students could identify the challenges that they find in listening to various kinds of accent in English.
4. The students could anticipate the problem and the difficulties that appear by an accent in learning English, especially in listening and speaking subject skills.
5. The students can be accessible in solving their problem when they have the same related problem caused by accents in their learning process.
6. By knowing various kinds of English accents, the students can be comfortable to improve their skill in listening.

The researcher concluded that all students had a positive perception of the accents of non-native English speakers. In the end, they shared the same opinion that being introduced the English accents was meaningful and beneficial for their learning process, though in the process of listening that they identified challenges or difficulties.

However, the challenges and difficulties that students identified in listening to the accents of non-native English speakers did not make all of them have a negative perception.

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