

**A STUDY ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS FACED  
BY SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH  
STUDY PROGRAM FKIP - UR**

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**Abstract:** *This study was aimed at identifying the students' response to the importance of studying listening comprehension, and finding out problems faced by second year students of English Study Program - FKIP UR in listening comprehension. This study was a descriptive research. The population of this research was the second year students of English study program of FKIP-UR. The sample of this research was selected by using total sampling technique. There were 90 students who participated in this research. The instrument of this research was a set of questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one contained questions about students' self-rated English listening proficiency level (1 item), students' perceptions related to their high school education (4 items), students' response to the importance of listening skill (5 items), and students' ways of practicing listening skill (5 items). Section two consisted questions about listening comprehension problems grouped into seven categories: listening material (6 items), linguistics aspects (6 items), lack of concentration (5 items), psychological characteristics (5 items), listener (5 items), speaker (5 items), and physical setting (3 items). After all data were collected, the average percentage of each questionnaire item was calculated. The research findings showed that 90.22% of students responded that they realized the importance of English listening skill. It was also found that poor quality of equipments, lack of concentration, un-clear pronunciation, speed rate, unfamiliar word and topic, and psychological problem were the major problems of Listening Comprehension faced by second year students of English study program FKIP University of Riau.*

**Key Words:** *Study, Listening, Comprehension, Problem*

## **STUDI TENTANG MASALAH-MASALAH PADA PEMAHAMAN LISTENING YANG DIHADAPI OLEH MAHASISWA TAHUN KE-2 PRODI BAHASA INGGRIS FKIP - UR**

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**Abstract:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tanggapan mahasiswa terhadap pentingnya belajar listening comprehension, dan mengetahui masalah-masalah yang dihadapi mahasiswa tahun kedua studi program pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP-UR dalam listening comprehension. Penelitian ini adalah sebuah penelitian deskriptif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tahun kedua studi program pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP-UR. Sampel penelitian ini diseleksi menggunakan teknik total sampling. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah kuisioner. Kuisionernya terdiri dari dua bagian. Bagian satu berisi pertanyaan-pertanyaan tentang penilaian diri sendiri oleh mahasiswa tentang tingkat kemampuan listening dalam bahasa Inggris (1 item), tanggapan mahasiswa berkaitan dengan pendidikan sekolah menengah mereka (4 item), tanggapan mahasiswa terhadap pentingnya kemampuan listening (5 item), dan metode mahasiswa dalam berlatih kemampuan listening (5 item). Bagian dua berisi pertanyaan tentang masalah-masalah pada listening comprehension yang dikelompokkan kedalam tujuh kategori: materi listening (6 item), aspek ilmu bahasa (6 item), kurang konsentrasi (5 item), karakteristik psikologi (5 item), pendengar (5 item), pembicara (5 item), and pengaturan fisik (3 item). Setelah semua data dikumpulkan, peneliti mengkalkulasikan rata-rata persentase dari setiap item dari kuisioner. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 90,22% mahasiswa merespon bahwa mereka menyadari akan pentingnya kemampuan listening dalam bahasa Inggris. Ditemukan juga bahwa rendahnya kualitas peralatan, kurangnya konsentrasi, pengucapan yang tidak jelas, tingkat kecepatan, kata-kata dan topik yang tidak biasa atau umum, dan masalah psikologi menjadi masalah yang paling serius pada Listening Comprehension yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa tahun kedua studi program pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP University of Riau.

**Kata kunci:** Studi, Listening, Pemahaman, Masalah

## INTRODUCTION

Being an international language, English is spoken in the most countries in the world and it is used as the medium of the information on science, technology, and culture. In learning English, there are four skills that should be learned by students, they are: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Listening is the first skill that has to be mastered by the students, because without having a good listening skill, the process of communication cannot run well (Hamouda, 2013). For example, the listener can not understand what the speaker is saying because of the lack of listening skill.

According to Yang & Chen (2007) listening is the form of verbal communication most frequently employed in the foreign language classrooms. Over half of the time learners are using their listening skills. Yet, for most people, listening skill is seen as a secondary skill, and it will develop naturally within the process of language learning. As a result, it remains the most neglected and the least understood aspect of language teaching (Glisan, 1985 in Yang & Chen, 2007).

Underwood (1989) states the problems in listening comprehension are: Lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak, not being able to get things repeated, the listener's limited vocabulary, failure to recognized the "signals", problem of interpretation, inability to concentrate (topic, effort, technical problems), and established learning habit or listening perfectionism. Higgin (1995) states the problems and the factors in listening comprehension faced by Omani students are speech rate, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

In this study, the writer focused on listening comprehension problems encountered by second year students of English study program of FKIP-UR. There are three levels listening subject at English study program; there are Listening I, Listening II, and Listening III (2 credits per each one). The second year students already took Listening I and Listening II in the first year, and nowadays they are still learning in Listening III class in their second year of the college. From the writer's observation, many of the students think that listening is the most difficult skill and being the first problem when they learn English. They have difficulty in understanding the spoken text of the lessons and maintaining concentration for a long time since they listen to English as a foreign language.

The writer also collected the score data that was obtained from Listening I and Listening II. Their scores were good. In Listening Comprehension I, there were 36% students got A, 67,4% students got B, and only 6,6% students got C. Then in Listening Comprehension II, there were 57,78% students got A, 33,3% students got B, 4,4% students got C, and also 4,4% students got D. In fact, these final scores of the students are gained from several components: attendances, task, mid-term test, and final test. Moreover, one of lecturers stated that the final score also included another aspect such as participation of the students in class. It means that the score data was not purely from the students' ability.

The writer also interviewed some lecturers who teach Listening Comprehension class. One of lecturers said that he did not focus on the ability of the students while teaching in Listening Comprehension class. He more concerned about how was the process of the students while learning listening comprehension. According to him, the ability of the students in listening skill was poor. Therefore, we could not see their ability from only observing their final score since it included some aspects mentioned in the last paragraph. In addition, another lecturer stated that students were lack of

interpretation. He said that students used to directly translate what the speaker says, not the speaker means. According to him, this was as a result of the dictation technique done by the teachers when they taught the students at that time they were still at primary school.

By identifying the problems, this study can help students to explore the strategies they use in response to the problems. It is also intended to raise teachers' awareness of these problematic areas in listening comprehension so that appropriate treatment measures can be taken. As describe above, the writer was particularly interested to choose this topic with entitled: A Study on Listening Comprehension Problems Faced by Second Year Students of English Study Program FKIP University of Riau.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research was conducted at English Study Program FKIP-UR in Pekanbaru from May to October 2016. This research is a descriptive research. According to Gay (1987) descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer the questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. This research aimed to find out the problems faced by second year students of English Study Program - FKIP UR in listening comprehension. The population of this research was the second year students of English study program FKIP-UR. There are 3 classes with approximately 30 students each class. The reasons for choosing the second year students of English study program FKIP-UR as the subject of this research were that they learned listening comprehension I and II in their first year and they have been learning in listening comprehension III in the second year of the college. The sample was selected by using total sampling technique. Total Sampling is a sampling technique in which the number of sample is equal to the number of population (Sugiyono, 2008). The reason for using total sampling was because the population is less than 100 people (Sugiyono, 2008). Another reason was possible to get deep insights into the phenomenon. With such wide coverage of the population, there is also a reduced risk of missing potential insights from members that are not included. (Lund Research Ltd, 2012).

The data used in this research was the data about the problems faced by second year students of English study program FKIP – UR in listening comprehension. The data were quantitative data. The instrument of this research was questionnaire. The construction of the questionnaire was based on the indicators generated from the research questions that mentioned on the background of this research and from the common problems in listening comprehension. The questionnaire was adapted from English Listening Comprehension Problems questionnaire of study conducted by Arafat Hamouda in 2013. The questionnaire was designed after a review of the literature (Underwood (1989); M.Naeem (2010); Higgins (1995); Hansan (2000); Yagang (1994); Boyle (1984); Flowerdew & Miller (1996); Buck (2001) about factors that influence listening comprehension. The validity of the original questionnaire was selected by four experienced teachers who have taught English listening for years in Qassim University. The questionnaire was also applicable for the Indonesian students since the original questionnaire were intended to students at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia who also learn English as a foreign language.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one was dealing with the first research question, it contained questions to collect the students' response to the importance of listening skill (5), and some additional information about their self-rated English listening proficiency level (1), perceptions related to their high school education (4), and ways of practicing listening skill (5). And section two was dealing with the second research question. It consisted of some listening problems grouped into seven categories: listening material (6), linguistic aspects (6), lack of concentration (5), psychological characteristics (5), listener (5), speaker (5), and physical setting (3). The original questionnaire consisted of 61 questions which were designed into four sections. Meanwhile, the writer made some modification based on the comments and revisions from the writer's consultants who teach in English study program FKIP-UR. Therefore, the numbers of questionnaire which were given to the sample (students) were only 50 items. The number of item each indicator depends on the statements, relevance to the students' condition and also students' need.

The purpose of this research was to find out the problems faced by second year students of English study program FKIP – UR in listening comprehension. The writer collected the data by giving questionnaire. The sample was asked to fill out the questionnaire. The procedures of collecting the data were as follows:

- The writer made a deal of time and place with each chairman of 3 classes.
- The writer asked students to fill out the questionnaire inside the class.
- The students gave back the completed questionnaire to the writer.
- The writer started to analyze all of the data.

In scoring the questionnaire, the writer used the Likert scale. Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or a group to the social phenomenon (Sugiyono, 2012). After collecting all of the data, the writer analyzed and classified them based on the results of analysis done by the percentage of students' responses in the questionnaire.

To give the weight of each questionnaire, this research used the Likert Scale. The scale has five points of continuum, namely: Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never (Sorrel Brown, 2010). And also there were two tables (table 1 and table 2) that using five points scale namely: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, and Very Poor (Sorrel Brown, 2010). The score of every item depended on the statement. The range of the score statement is from 1-5. To analyze the result of the questionnaire, the writer calculated the average percentage of each category of the questionnaire. The following formula is used:

$$P = \frac{TS}{HS} \times 100\%$$

Where: P = Percentage  
 TS = Total Score (per one statement)  
 HS = Highest Score

(Source : Sugiyono, 2012)

### The formula of Total Score

$$\text{Total Score} = S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5$$

S1 = Number of respondents (always) x (5)

S2 = Number of respondents (often) x (4)

S3 = Number of respondents (sometimes) x (3)

S4 = Number of respondents (seldom) x (2)

S5 = Number of respondents (never) x (1)

### The Formula of Ideal Score

Y (The Highest Score) = 5 x number of all respondent

X (The Lowest Score) = 1 x number of all respondent

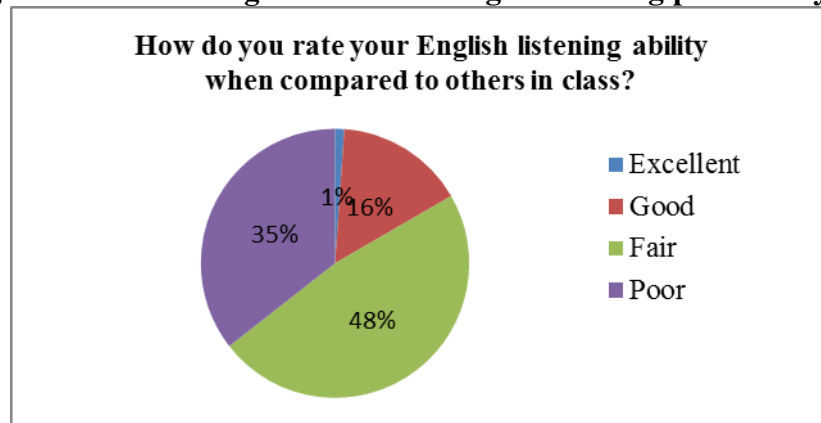
**Table 1. Interval of the percentage**

0-19,9%	Never
20-39,9%	Seldom
40-59,9%	Sometimes
60-79,9%	Often
80-100%	Always

(Source: Sugiyono, 2012)

## RESEARCH FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

After the data were obtained, they were calculated in form of percentage. In the first section of the questionnaire, the students were asked to give their responses to the importance of listening skill (5 items), and some additional information about their self-rated English listening proficiency level (1 item), perceptions related to their high school education (4 items), and ways of practicing listening skill (5 items). Therefore, the number of questionnaire section 1 that were given to the sample (students) were 15 items. The followings are the description of students' perception to the importance of listening skill. (Section 1)

**Diagram 1. Students' general self-rating to listening proficiency level**

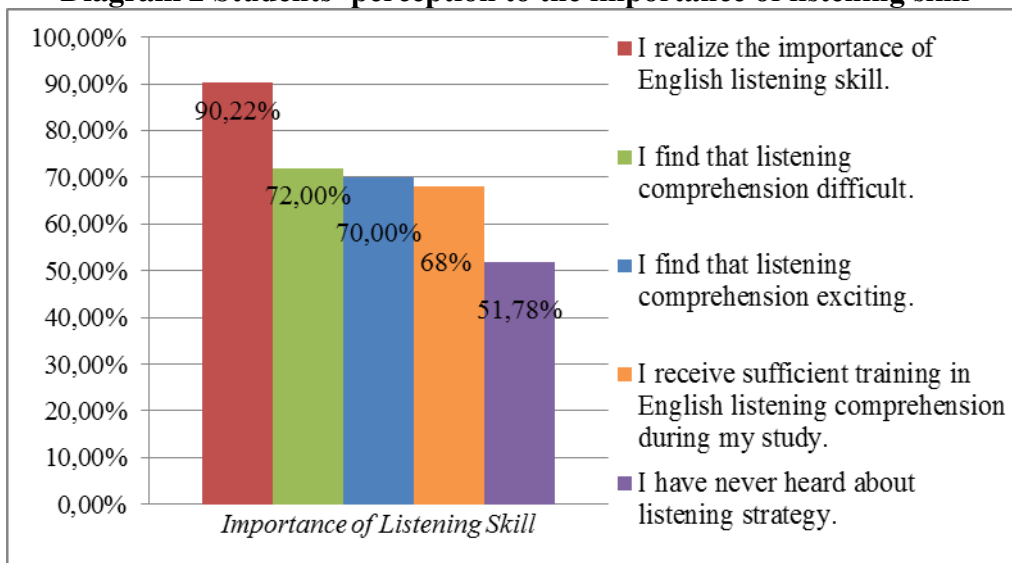
In the first item of the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate their proficiency levels in listening skill. The diagram above shows that more than three quarters of the students (83%) rated themselves as “fair, poor” in listening skill. Only 16% of the students thought that their listening skills were “good”, and only 1% of the students who rated themselves as “excellent” in listening skill. This item shows that the students can be categorized as **fair** (56,44%) in rating themselves to their proficiency levels in listening skill. The following is a description of students' perception related to their high school education.

**Table. 2 Students' Perception Related to Their High School Education**

Statements	Total Students	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Reading	90	3,33	72,22	20	4,44	0
Writing	90	5,56	28,89	45,56	18,89	1,11
Speaking	90	1,11	43,33	34,44	20,00	1,11
Listening	90	0,00	14,44	47,78	37,78	0

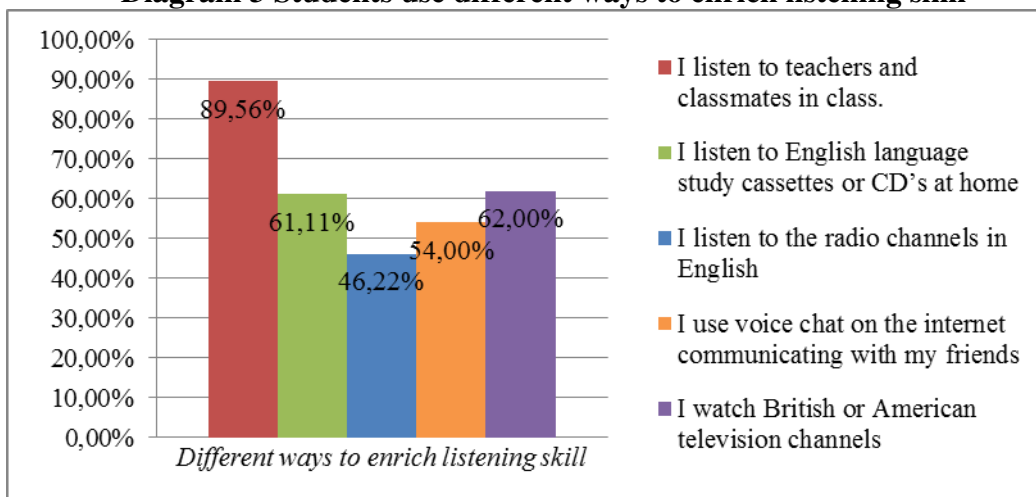
In the second table of the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate the instruction of skills taught during their high school education. There were 75,5% of the students who were pleased with the instruction of reading skill. Then, percentage of the students who chose “good” to evaluate the instruction of writing and listening were quite low (28,89% and 14,44%). However, there were 85,6% of the students who evaluated the instruction of listening as “fair/average, and poor”. The following is a description of students' perception to the importance of listening skill.

**Diagram 2 Students' perception to the importance of listening skill**



The diagram indicates that majority of students responded that they realized the importance of English listening skill (90,22%), and this item shows that the students can be categorized as **always** in responding to the importance of listening skill. Then, 72% of students considered to choose the second item which “I find that listening comprehension difficult” and then followed by third item which “I find that listening comprehension exciting” (70,00%). Both of these items show that the students can be categorized as **often** in responding to the importance of listening skill. The following is a description of students' different ways to enrich listening skill.

**Diagram 3 Students use different ways to enrich listening skill**



Based on diagram 3, it is clear that 89,56% of students responded that they listened to teachers and classmates in class, and this item shows that the students can be categorized as **always** in using different ways to enrich listening skill. There were 61,11% of students who considered to choose the second item which “I listen to English language study cassettes or CD's at home” and then followed by fifth item which “I

watch British or American television channels” (62,00%). Both of these items show that students can be categorized as **often** in using different ways to enrich listening skill.

Based on the students’ responses toward the given questionnaire, 83% students considered themselves as “fair / average, and poor” in listening skill. This might be a reflection of their frustration caused by their previous unhappy experiences in dealing with English because 85,6% of the students evaluated the instruction of skills taught during their high school education as “fair/average, poor”.

In the section two of the questionnaire, the students were asked to answer some questions related to some listening problems. The following is a description of Top Ten Listening Comprehension Problems faced by second year students of English study program FKIP-UR. (Section 2)

**Table 3 Top Ten Listening Problems**

No	Rank	Category	Statements	Percentage %
48	1	Physical Setting	It is difficult for me to concentrate with the noise around.	87,56%
32	2	Lack of Concentration	I lose my concentration if the recording is in a poor quality.	82,89%
43	3	Speaker	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	82,00%
45	4	Speaker	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	81,56%
49	5	Physical Setting	I find that un-clear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player interfered with my listening comprehension.	79,33%
33	6	Psychological Characteristics	I feel nervous and worried when I don’t understand the spoken text.	78,22%
16	7	Listening Material	I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words including jargon and idioms.	78,00%
36	8	Psychological Characteristics	If I don’t arrive at a total comprehension of an oral text, I feel disappointed.	77,78%
50	9	Physical Setting	I find that un-clear sounds resulting from poor equipment interfered with my listening comprehension.	75,33%
20	10	Listening Material	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to me.	74,67%

Table 3 lists the top ten listening comprehension problems faced by second year students of English study program FKIP-UR. The above table presents that from seven (7) categories of listening comprehension problems, five of them are in the

list of top ten, such as physical setting (3 items), psychological characteristics, speaker, listening material (2 items each categories), and lack of concentration (1 item).

Table of the top ten listening problems shows that physical setting held the highest percentage (87,59% means always) which “It is difficult for me to concentrate with noise around”. This result is in line with Hamouda’s study (2013) which also showed that a great number of students claimed that they could not be concentrated on listening to the recording material due to the noises around (96.6% always, often). According to Hamouda (2013) noise is another environmental barrier to comprehension. Noise, including both background noises on the recording and environmental noises, can take the listener’s mind off the content of the listening passage. The finding also proves the theory realized by Underwood (1989) that inability to concentrate (topic, efforts, technical problems) is a big obstacle to most students in listening comprehension.

It is the second position which “I lose my concentration if the recording is in a poor quality” (82,89% means always). This finding is in line with reached by (Underwood, 1989) states that inability to concentrate (topic, efforts, technical problems) is a big problems to most students in listening comprehension. This finding also coincides with Flowerdew & Miller (1996) in Yang & Chen (2007) who conducted that difficulties in concentrating and problems related to physical environment were in the top five listening difficulties.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> position is the unclear pronunciation caused the difficulty to understand the meaning of words (82% means always), and then followed by the 4<sup>th</sup> position which “I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast” (81,56%) are in accordance with the findings of the previous study (Higgins, 1995) which shows that speech rate and unclear pronunciation are the factors which hinder listening comprehension. Meanwhile, the 5<sup>th</sup> position which “I find that un-clear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD-player interfered with my listening comprehension” (79,33%) and the 9<sup>th</sup> position which “I find that un-clear sounds resulting from poor equipment interfered with my listening comprehension.” (75,33%) are in line with Yagang (1994) who attributes the difficulty of listening comprehension to physical setting.

The 6<sup>th</sup> position which “I feel nervous and worried when I don’t understand the spoken text” (78,22%) and the 8<sup>th</sup> position which “If I don’t arrive at a total comprehension of an oral text, I feel disappointed” (77,78%) also coincide with Yagang (1994) who states that the listening comprehension process is also a relatively complex psychological process. In psychology, it is stated that when a person feels nervous or anxious he or she may not be concentrated. When one felt uncomfortable, his or her ability to listen is greatly reduced. Boredom and frustration are other barriers to listening comprehension. Boredom and frustration may affect the extent to which attention is paid to listening. This occurs as a result of poor stimulation caused by disinterest in the topic, lack of motivation, failure in the part of the teacher to present meaningful material in a stimulating manner, or presenting the lecture in a monotone instigating sleep.

The 7<sup>th</sup> position is the difficulty to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words including jargon and idioms. This finding coincides with Naem Butt (2010) in Hamouda (2013) who reported that the major problem hindering listening comprehension was that the students’ vocabulary was too limited to understand the message. This finding is also in line with a study conducted by

Hansan (2000) in Yang & Chen (2007) who shows that unfamiliar words is one of the most important message factors for listening problems.

Last, the 10<sup>th</sup> position which “I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar to me” is in accordance with the theory realized by Buck (2001) in Hamouda (2013) who identifies that unfamiliar topic is one of the numerous difficulties which can be confronted in listening skill.

These findings (7th and 10th position) are also in line with Yang and Chen’s study (2007) which reported that unfamiliar words in the text and unfamiliar contents were in the top ten listening difficulties encountered by fourth-year students and second-year students. The finding was evidenced by the fact that the students reported the average time they spent in listening to the English learning program was about 40 minutes a week and 40 of them (32,3%) even reported that they never did any listening practice. In fact, these students did not regularly practice their skills. Finally, when the listening material contained more unfamiliar words and complicated syntactic structures, their problem would become more serious. As a result, their poor vocabulary knowledge, inadequate listening strategy, lack of practice and difficult text would naturally have led to numerous listening problems.

## CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the data of this research, the writer draws some conclusions as follows. Firstly, 90 students participated in this research. There were (75) 83% students considered themselves as “fair / average, and poor” in listening skill. Then, the percentage of the students who chose “fair/average, and poor” to evaluate the instruction of listening skill taught during their high school education were quite high (85,6%). It leads to an interpretation that the instruction of skill taught during high school education had the cause and effect relationship with the students’ self-rating to listening proficiency level which were in same relative answer (fair/average, and poor). In addition, the were 90,22% students responded that they realized the importance of English listening skill. It means that the majority of the second year students of English study program of FKIP-UR could be categorized as always in responding to the importance of listening comprehension.

Secondly, there were the most serious problems of Listening Comprehension faced by second year students of English study program FKIP University of Riau such as poor quality of equipments, lack of concentration, un-clear pronunciation, speed rate, unfamiliar word and topic, and psychological problem. These problems were in some categories of Listening Comprehension problems such as physical setting, lack of concentration, speaker, psychological characteristics, and listening material.

The two conclusions have answered the objectives of the research that were questions of how is the students’ response to the importance of studying listening comprehension, and what problems do the second year students have in listening comprehension.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning the conclusions, the writer would like to propose some recommendations related to the students' problems in listening comprehension. The recommendations are follows:

1. The students need to improve their listening skill by practicing more listening exercise and listening to English talks as many as possible an expanding their knowledge on register in various field of study.
2. The students also should motivate themselves to enrich their listening skill.
3. Besides, the students also should learn more about the strategies that can be useful in listening comprehension especially in facing comprehension problems.
4. The teachers should have a better understanding of their students' listening difficulties and evaluate their own teaching methods to improve students' listening comprehension.
5. Other researchers can also focus on how to overcome the difficulties or problems of listening comprehension faced by the students.

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