LEARNING NOTE-TAKING TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study was intended to improve the listening skills of third year students in the English Language Education Study Program at Al-Muslim University and to find out their response to the teaching-learning of note-taking techniques and as well to improve the performance of their lecturer. This study used a classroom action research design done in two cycles. The results of the research showed that using the note taking technique was effective in improving the listening skills of the students whose pre-test mean scores of 62 increased to 72 after cycle 1 and then, reached 77 after the end of the second cycle. Furthermore, the results from the observation checklist showed that the percentage of the students participating in the teaching-learning process increased from 71% after the first cycle to 96% at the end of the second cycle which meant that the note taking technique had been successfully introduced with the listening class, and also the lecturer’s performance had improved as well from 72% in the first cycle to reach 97% in the second cycle. Moreover, the results, from the questionnaire, showed that the students responded positively to the teaching-learning of the note taking technique. Thus, based on the results of this study, it is recommended that teaching-learning of note taking techniques by students should be introduced by teachers and lecturers as a way to improve the listening comprehension skills of their students.

Keywords: listening skills, note taking techniques, improving teaching-learning

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is very important in the processes of communicating with other people. Wolvin (2010) has said that listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. Listening skills allow someone to make sense of and to understand what another person is saying. In other words, listening skills allow people to participate actively as a student sitting in a lecture or as a participant in a conversation. That is why listening is one of the most important skills in learning a language, especially in learning EFL English.

In teaching-learning EFL English listening, a lecturer needs to encourage the students to participate by making it an interesting activity. Thus, he should support the students to practice using English in order to improve their English listening skills so that it will be easier for them to interact with other people using English. Wilson (2008) has written that teachers should provide appropriate material for continual listening practice in order to give their students chances to practice EFL English listening carefully and to build their self-confidence in using English. In addition, teaching listening is a process in the English classroom in which there are interactions between the lecturer and his students. Teaching EFL English listening requires collaboration between a creative teacher and active students using a good technique whereby the lecturer guides the students in how to get information from the audio material. So, the goal of teaching-learning listening comprehension is to enable the students to listen to English well.

According to Sailah et al. (2014), teaching-learning English actively is done by listening, reading, writing, discussion, and being involved in solving problems and being actively involved in high level thinking activities in English, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation, either individually or collectively in groups. Moreover, Sailah et al. (2014) have emphasized that students are usually not accustomed to taking notes by using mind mapping techniques or note taking techniques. They feel reassured if the material, in the form of power point or similar notes, can be provided by their lecturer.

Research Questions

1. How did the lecturer perform in teaching-learning note-taking techniques to improve his students’ EFL listening skills in semester III of the English course at Al-muslim University?
2. How effective was the teaching-learning of note-taking techniques in improving students’ EFL listening skills in semester III of the English course at Al-muslim University?
3. How did the students respond to the teaching-learning of note-taking techniques for EFL listening in semester III of the English course at Al-muslim University?

**Research Objectives**

1. To improve the lecturer’s performance and the students’ skills in teaching-learning of note-taking techniques for learning EFL English listening comprehension.
2. To find out the students’ responses to the teaching-learning of the note-taking techniques for learning skills for EFL English listening comprehension.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Listening Skills**

According to Rost (2002), listening is a complex process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Meanwhile, Nordquist (2012) has defined listening as “the active process of receiving and responding to spoken (and sometimes unspoken) messages”. This statement is also supported by Jafari and Hashim (2015) in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), who have written that listening is a channel for comprehensible input and that more than 50 percent of the time learners spend in learning a foreign language is devoted to listening. In daily life, listening is used for opening windows to the world. Rost (2009) has said that listening helps us to understand the world around us and that it is one of the necessary elements in creating successful communications.

Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that listening is an active process which is part of communication between a speaker and a listener where the listener plays the role of catching the message and then analyzing, evaluating, and responding to what the speaker has said.

In real life, students frequently need to take action based on information that has been provided by the speaker. Consequently, it is essential that they are able to understand what is being said. Action-based listening scenarios include listening to announcements at airports.
or tuning into weather and traffic reports. Non-action-based listening scenarios can be watching television, listening to a story or watching a play or a film in a theatre or on the TV or on a VCD or on the internet.

**Notetaking Techniques**

In the teaching-learning processes, the essential skill that the students need to learn is note taking. Many of the strategies for reading note-taking also apply to listening note-taking. However, unlike reading, you can’t stop a lecture and rerun and review it as you listen (unless you are listening to a VCD or a tape recorded lecture). Therefore, preparations prior to listening can greatly improve comprehension. When you take notes, you should have a clear purpose, strive to recognize main ideas, and be ready to select what is most relevant. You cannot write down everything that is said, unless you can write in Pitman’s shorthand, however there is a system that students can learn for recording information that will work for them.

Students can be taught-learn to use the Cornell note-taking system for recording information they listen to. According to Pauk (2011), the Cornell note-taking system was developed to help Cornell University students organize their notes better. Today, the Cornell note-taking system is probably the most widely used note-taking system throughout the United States. There are six steps in the Cornell note-taking system: Record, Reduce (or Question), Recite, Reflect, Recapitulate and Review.

1. **Record**

   Simply record as many facts and ideas as you can in the six-inch, 15 cm column. Do not be concerned with getting every word down that the lecturer says or with writing your notes grammatically correct. Learn to write telegraphic sentences or a streamlined version of the main points of the lecture by using only key words, abbreviated words, code words and leaving out unnecessary words, eg. articles, auxiliaries, conjunctions and determiners and most quantifiers

2. **Reduce (or question)**

   After the lecture or whatever is finished, and you have free time, you read through your notes and your next step is to reduce important facts and ideas to key words or phrases, or to formulate questions based on the facts and ideas. Key words, phrases, and questions are now rewritten in the narrow column to the left of the 15 cm column. These words and phrases act as memory cues so that when you review them,
you will recall the ideas or facts. The questions help to clarify the meaning of the facts and ideas.

3. Recite

Recitation is a very powerful process in the retention of information. Reciting is different from re-reading, in that you state out loud and in your own words the facts and ideas you are trying to learn. It is an effective way to learn because hearing your thoughts helps you to sharpen your thinking processes; and stating ideas and facts in your own words challenges you to think about the meaning of the information. When reciting, cover up your notes in the 15 cm column, while leaving the cue words and questions uncovered and readily accessible. Next, read each key word or question, then recite and state aloud, in your own words, the information. If your answer is correct, continue on through your notes by reciting aloud.

4. Reflect

Reflection is pondering or thinking about the information you have learned. Reflecting is a step beyond learning the content of notes. It reinforces deeper learning by relating new facts and ideas to other learning and knowledge. Questions like the following enhance reflecting: How do these facts and ideas fit into what I already know? How can I apply them? How is knowing this important? What is the significance of these facts and ideas?

5. Recapitulate

The recapitulation or summary of your notes goes at the bottom of the note page in the 5 cm, two-inch thick block, like a foot-note. Taking a few minutes after you have reduced, recited, and reflected to summarize the facts and ideas in your notes will help you integrate the information. The summary should not be a word-for-word re-write of your notes. It should be in your own words and summarize the main points you want to remember from your notes.

6. Review

The way to prevent forgetting is to review and recite your notes frequently. A good guideline to follow is to review your notes nightly or several times during each week by reciting, not re-reading until the information is firmly imprinted in your brain.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study used a classroom action research (CAR) design. This research design was used to answer the research questions about
Learning Note-Taking Techniques to Improve Listening Skills (C. As’ari & T. Zulfikar)

improving students’ EFL listening skills through using note-taking techniques in order to retain and memorize data. According to Parsons and Brown (2002), action research is a form of investigation designed for use by teachers and lecturers to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their classrooms. It involves systematic observations and data collection which can then be used by the practitioner-researcher in reflection, decision-making and the development of more effective classroom strategies.

This study was conducted with the Study Program in English Language Education of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Al-muslim University which is located at Matang Gelumpang Dua in Bireuen District, Aceh Province. The research was conducted with the third year English Language Education students of the Study Program in English Language Education in the 2016/2017 academic year. These students were chosen as the subject for this research since the researcher has been a lecturer in English there for the past 8 years. There was only one class of third year students with 19 students, 3 males and 16 females, in the Study Program in English Language Education. The lecturer found that his students had some difficulties in listening to English. For instance, the students were not able to recall information from audio talks and appeared to have low motivation for learning listening. In fact, good EFL listening ability is a “Must” and is really expected to be mastered when learning EFL English.

In this research, the data was collected using a test, an observation sheet and a questionnaire. Data was gathered about (1) the improvement of the students from the pre-test to the post-test results, (2) about the students’ responses to the use of the technique for improving their listening retention skills through the questionnaire, and (3) about the teacher’s performance through observation sheets completed by his research collaborator.

The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative steps for analysis. First, the notes from the teaching-learning and the students’ responses to the learning the note taking processes at each meeting were compared. Next, the data from the observation sheets was analyzed according to qualitative data procedures. Meanwhile, the students’ improvements in listening skills were analyzed by using a procedure for analysing quantitative data with a rubric from the Cornell note-taking study.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows that the mean score obtained by the students after cycle 1 was 72, which was an improvement of 9 points which meant that the result did not meet the success indicator required from all 17 students. Only one student showed great improvement from the pre-test while ten had significant improvement, 3 had little and 3 had no improvement. Based on this result, the researcher found that the students’ average result still did not meet the success indicator (SI) which was 75 so he did another teaching-learning cycle. Table 1 shows that after the second cycle the students’ mean score increased to 77 which showed that on average the students had gained a further 5 points and had reached the SI. However, in actuality, four (4) students had still not reached the SI including one who had reached it in the first post-test.

Table 1. Students’ Scores and Improvements in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-Test (1)</th>
<th>1st Post-Test (2)</th>
<th>2nd Post-Test (3)</th>
<th>Improvement (1-2)</th>
<th>Improvement (2-3)</th>
<th>Total Change (1-3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HN</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MR</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>VO</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CM</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>WR</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>CRA</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>ZA</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56*</td>
<td>-0</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>-0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>YH</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>1316</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Table 2. Highest, Lowest, Score Groups and Changes in Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Group</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test 1</th>
<th>Post-test 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Score</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Score</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score: &gt; 75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase: &gt;10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 and -1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Mean Scores of Responses to the Use of the Note Taking Techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variable Measured</th>
<th>Questionnaire Number</th>
<th>Total scores</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Studying happily</td>
<td>1,10,16</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Easier to master the lesson</td>
<td>2,5,12,13,15</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Easier to comprehend the lesson</td>
<td>3,4,9,14</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Became more motivated to study</td>
<td>6,8</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More creative in learning and solving problems</td>
<td>7,11</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 3, it was found that the mean score for each variable from the five items toward the total mean score can be interpreted as follows:

2. Easy to master the lesson: 3. Criteria: strongly agree
5. Creative in learning and solving the problem: 3. Criteria: strongly agree
Overall, the mean score of the students’ perception to the implementation of the Note-taking techniques for the EFL listening comprehension class was 4 which is in the criteria “strongly agree”. This means that the students responded positively towards the implementation of the technique.

**Discussions**

In discussing the implementation of the note-taking techniques, the researcher refers to the procedures for the teaching-learning of the note-taking techniques. This is done to recall the elements of the note-taking techniques that should be included in the teaching-learning processes. There were three phases in teaching-learning the note-taking techniques in the EFL listening comprehension class viz: pre-listening comprehension activities, whilst listening comprehension activities and post-listening comprehension activities.

In the pre-listening comprehension activities, the researcher began by introducing the lesson, trying to activate the students’ prior knowledge, and explaining any complicated and unfamiliar words. Furthermore, the researcher divided the students into groups, five groups of three and one group with only two members. Each member of each group had to participate actively in their own group. Nevertheless, the final evaluations would be done individually. The researcher also explained the tasks and the concepts of note-taking in order to complete the tasks and arranged the co-operation amongst the students.

During the whilst listening comprehension activities, the researcher instructed the students to listen to the audio tape and write the keywords of the information from the tape individually. After that, they had to make the question phrase from the keywords of the information. Before evaluating the information, the researcher recited it well. While the students were running their activities, the researcher moved around the class to monitor and help the students. In particular, the researcher focused on the passive students and tried to make them participate more actively in their group. After they had written their summaries, the researcher reviewed their notes carefully.

In the post-listening comprehension activities, the researcher asked the students to collect their notes sheet. Then, he did reflections to make the students understand the lesson well.
Analysis of the Researcher’s Observation Results

The duty of the observer was to observe and comment on the researcher’s implementation of the note-taking lessons. According to the notes in the observer’s observation sheets, the researcher improved in each cycle in implementing the note-taking techniques as the researcher attempted to create a comfortable atmosphere for implementing the note-taking techniques.

Based on the observation sheets, it can be concluded that the researcher’s activities in the teaching-learning process during the first cycle were still low as his score was only 72% which is only at the Good level. This showed that the researcher did not execute all the steps of the learning objectives well in the teaching-learning processes for the first cycle. Hence, it was necessary that a second cycle be carried out to get a better result.

Following the second cycle, the implementation of the note-taking techniques was successful. This was proven by the result from the observation sheet for the lecturer which reached 97% which is at the Very Good Level. This meant that the teaching-learning process had been implemented maximally and had reached the success indicator on average so that another cycle was not needed.

Analysis of the Students’ Observation Results

Observation of the students was done in each cycle of teaching-learning. Those students who were interested in the note-taking techniques improved in each cycle. In the first cycle, the average student score was 71% which was categorized as Good. This increased in the second cycle to reach 96% which is categorized as Very Good. This happened because all the steps of the note-taking techniques in the teaching-learning process were implemented well. In conclusion, the technique was applied well and it successfully improved the students listening skills during the teaching-learning processes.

Analysis of the Students’ Test Results

The effectiveness of the implementation of the note-taking techniques to improve the students’ EFL listening comprehension skills could be seen in the results from the listening tests. The improvement can be seen from the comparison of the pre-test and post-test results given at the end of each cycle. The students’ mean score from the first pre-test was 63 with no students in the highest group, 75 and over;
twelve students were in the middle group, 60 – 74; and five students were in the lower group, below 60.

After the first cycle, the mean score in the post-test 1 increased by 9 points from 63 to 72. The number of students who were categorized in the highest group, scoring 75 and over increased from zero to ten students, while the middle group, scoring 60 to 74, decreased from twelve to five students and the lowest group, scoring less than 60, decreased from five to two students.

Then after the second cycle, the mean score from post-test 2 increased to 77 with thirteen students in the highest group, three students in the middle group and only one student in the lowest group. This showed that the implementation of the note-taking techniques was effective in improving the listening comprehension skills of the students.

The findings from this research are in line with those from a previous study on the Cornell note-taking techniques conducted by Optista (2007) which showed that note-taking techniques can be successful in improving the listening comprehension ability of students as well as in increasing their involvement in the teaching-learning processes.

Next, was research done by Hayati and Jalilifar, in 2009, who found that teaching-learning note-taking techniques resulted in higher scores in listening comprehension. Finally, Robisari (2012) concluded that there was a significant improvement after learning to use the note-taking techniques in the EFL listening comprehension achievements of eleventh year students at SMAN 1 Lumajang. Therefore, it is recommended that lecturers engaged in teaching-learning of EFL listening comprehension should teach-learn the note-taking techniques to their students to improve their listening comprehension skills.

Responses to the Implementation of Learning the Note-Taking Techniques

In order to find out the responses of the students to learning the note-taking techniques, the researcher gave them a questionnaire with 16 questions which were classified into five variables viz: studying happily, easy to master the lessons, easy to comprehend the lessons, becoming motivated to study and increasing creativity in learning and solving problems. The questionnaire used close ended questions with a Likert scale.
The results from the questionnaire showed that the students’ perceptions toward the implementation of the note-taking technique for the first variable ‘studying happily’ had a mean score of 4 in the criteria of Strongly Agree. Their responses to the second variable ‘easy to master the lessons’ scored 3 or Strongly Agree. In the third variable ‘easier to comprehend the lesson’, the mean score was again 4 or Strongly Agree again. Next, the responses to the fourth variable ‘became motivated in studying’ also had a mean score of 4 or Strongly Agree. In the last variable ‘becoming creative in learning and solving problems’, the students’ mean score was 3 or Strongly Agree.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that in general the students had a positive response to the teaching-learning of EFL note-taking techniques to improve listening because the overall mean score for the five variables was 4 or Strongly Agree. This meant that the students fully supported the teaching-learning of the note-taking techniques to improve their EFL listening comprehension skills in their EFL listening comprehension class.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The previous findings and discussions, showed that the lecturer’s activities in the teaching-learning processes in the first cycle was still low with a score of only 72%. This indicated that the researcher/lecturer had not executed all the steps of the learning objectives well in the teaching-learning processes for the first cycle. This meant that a second cycle had to be done to get a better result. In the second cycle, the implementation of the notetaking techniques was successful. This was proven by the results from the observation of the lecturer which reached 97%. This meant that the teaching-learning processes were implemented maximally and as they reached the success indicator another cycle was not needed.

Relating to the results from the tests, the students’ mean pre-test score was 63 which increased to 72 after the first cycle and to 77 after the second cycle. Furthermore, the percentage of the students’ participation in the teaching-learning processes gradually increased. This can be seen from the results of the observation checklist where the percentage of students involved was 71% in the first cycle which increased to 96% in the second cycle which meant that the note taking technique was successfully implemented in the EFL listening comprehension class.
Furthermore, the result of the questionnaire indicated that the students were interested and had a positive attitude towards the implementation of the note taking technique in the teaching-learning of EFL listening. From the questionnaire responses, most of the students chose ‘Strongly Agree’ to the application of the note taking technique teaching-learning listening. There were only a few students who were not interested in the use of the note taking technique for teaching-learning listening. Overall, this was due to the fact that the majority of the students preferred studying EFL listening by using the note-taking techniques to any other technique or not using any technique hence it can be said that the students responded positively to learning how to use the Cornell note-taking techniques.

Based on the analysis of the findings, the note-taking techniques are effective for teaching-learning EFL listening comprehension. Therefore, some suggestions are offered for further study for the implementation of note taking techniques for teaching-learning EFL listening comprehension.

In relation to the teacher’s performance, it is suggested that the lecturer should have a good understanding of the proper application of the note-taking techniques for teaching-learning EFL listening comprehension. Moreover, the lecturer should prepare the materials and activities needed prior to the class beginning to ensure an efficient classroom program of activities during the teaching-learning process. The lecturer also needs to manage the time effectively so that both the lecturer and the students can enjoy the teaching-learning process happily. As a consequence, the class will become a comfortable place for teaching-learning EFL listening comprehension. Finally, it is suggested that other researchers can conduct further research in order to get many more results to strengthen this study so that any weaknesses will be found out in the future.

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