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Article

The Effectiveness of British and American Accents on Listening Comprehension to the Second Semester of English Department at IAIN PonorogoNahidl Diyan Ilahiy¹, Dhinuk Puspita Kirana²¹²Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogodiyan.ilahiy@gmail.com**Article Info**

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ABSTRACT

Listening, a crucial component of language acquisition, plays a significant role. It may seem like an easy task, but listening to a foreign language, especially English, will make it more difficult for learners. Some people hold the opinion that listening is the key to enhancing pronunciation. Accents are implied to have an impact on students' linguistic attitudes in a learning context. In this study, the effects of two different accents—British and American—on students' listening comprehension skills are examined. The main goal is to evaluate how different accents affect students' comprehension abilities. The listening comprehension scores of the two groups of students, one exposed to the British accent and the other to the American accent, were measured before and after the treatments as part of this study's quantitative research methodology. Results show that accents have a noticeable impact on listening comprehension. With a mean improvement of 16.2 points, the group exposed to the American accent showed a considerable improvement in their listening comprehension average scores. In contrast, the group exposed to the British accent experienced a marginally smaller rise in average score—an increase of 11.28 points. With the American accent outperforming the British accent in this study.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of sounds used by humans to express thoughts and emotions. English as a universal language is important to communicate with people from other countries. Proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing is essential for both teachers and students, particularly in Indonesia where English is a mandatory subject for final exams. Teachers play a facilitative role in aiding students' English language learning. Listening, categorized as a critical receptive skill, significantly contributes to mastering English. Its fundamental role goes beyond surface understanding, forming a basis for language comprehension. While seemingly simple, effective listening in a foreign language,

notably English, is complex. Emphasizing that improved pronunciation is closely linked to meaningful and understandable listening experiences for students (Helgesen et al., 2012).

Listening is a skill that involves the ability to accurately perceive and understand spoken language. It encompasses the intricate process of deciphering a speaker's accent or pronunciation, syntactic structures, vocabulary usage, and the overall comprehension of meaning. A proficient listener adeptly manages all these tasks concurrently, showcasing a high level of listening skill (Saricoban, 1999). Miranti stated in her journal from Saha and Rezwani "listening is a skill in a sense that it's related but distinct process than hearing which involves merely perceiving sounds in a passive way, while listening occupies an active and immediate analysis of the streams of sound (Miranti, n.d.). Furthermore, listening is an activity which the listeners make a supposition of the speaker's meaning.

Accent is a linguistic term for a language variation (Ikeno & Hansen, 2007). Accents significantly impact students' English learning and listening comprehension. Research by Halimah suggests that accents influence students' attitudes towards language in education, where easier accents facilitate better language understanding (Halimah, 2017). It is noted that students tend to favor familiar accents to enhance their listening abilities when communicating in English. However, exposure to diverse accents poses challenges for students, primarily affecting their comprehension. Unfamiliar or strong accents make it challenging for students to understand content, whether in casual conversations, academic lectures, or professional presentations. Pronunciation and vocabulary differences caused by varying accents contribute to this difficulty. Unique language elements such as idiomatic expressions and regional phrases further create barriers, leading to confusion and hindering students' understanding of intended meanings.

In this research, the researcher limits the accent into 2 kinds of speakers' accents, which are British and American English accents. British English and American English are the two main standard of English Varieties (Trudgill, 2006). There are so many things that differentiate American and British accent but the main distinctions between the British and American accents are the vocabulary and pronunciation (Alftberg, 2009). While the spelling also takes part in what makes each of American and British accent different from each other, Tottie explained that spelling distinctions acknowledgements are systematic (Tottie, n.d.).

Based on pre-research that the researcher has conducted within the context of the second semester of the English Department, specifically in the Intensive Listening Class at IAIN Ponorogo. Many students facing difficulties in understanding diverse accents may encounter a decline in confidence in their listening skills. Struggling with unfamiliar accents can lead to self-consciousness, affecting overall communication and learning. Accents are closely tied to speakers' cultural backgrounds, and understanding this context is vital for accurate comprehension. This implies that alongside language proficiency, students should develop cultural awareness to better grasp intended meanings. Additionally, students interacting with diverse linguistic backgrounds may face challenges due to their own accents, influencing their ability to understand and be understood. Thus, a two-way challenge emerges as students aim to navigate both understanding others and being comprehensible themselves.

The study delves specifically into the delineation of English accents, focusing primarily on the contrasting features of British and American English. These accents, while both considered standard variants, exhibit significant disparities, particularly in vocabulary and spelling. The distinctions in vocabulary, particularly in three core semantic domains—food, clothing, and transportation—highlight marked differences between British and American accents. For instance, what Americans refer to as 'cookies,' 'French fries,' and 'potato chips,' the British counterpart terms 'biscuits,' 'chips,' and 'crisps,' respectively. Similarly, clothing items such as 'underpants,' 'smocks,' and 'vests' in American English find their equivalents as 'trousers,' 'waistcoats,' and 'overalls' in British English. Transportation terms follow a similar

trend with 'road,' 'trailer,' and 'turnpike' in American English contrasting 'high street,' 'caravan,' and 'motorway' in British English.

Understanding the ease or difficulty of comprehending these accents varies greatly among individuals, contingent upon their exposure, familiarity, and prior language learning experiences. Each person's unique background plays a crucial role in determining which accent they find more accessible. It is important to note that perceptions of the simplicity of understanding either accent can be subjective and differ widely from person to person based on their exposure to British and American English. To foster an enriched understanding of English language variations, language learners can benefit significantly from exposure to a diverse range of accents beyond British and American English. Such exposure not only enhances overall listening comprehension but also cultivates adaptability to a wide array of linguistic styles and expressions.

In consideration of the research's background and constraints, the research issues are formulated as 1. "What are the effects of British and American accents on students listening comprehension?" 2. "What is the optimal accent that facilitates optimal comprehension and engagement?"

METHODS

The method of approach this research used was quantitative research method. A quantitative method is one in which the results of the research are described numerically. The quantitative approach offers a structured framework to streamline the research, ensuring precision in data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2012). Research variables that can be measured using different measurement scales, including nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales. Quantitative research methods are an effort to study issues, with issues already in existence serving as the foundation for data collection. Then variables and measurements are determined (Williams, 2007).

The data was collected in form of students' listening comprehension score from pre-test and the post-test. Pre-test showed to the researcher the original student's ability before receiving treatment using one of the specific accents. While in the other hand, the post-test allowed for a comprehensive comparison between the two groups that had been exposed to treatments using British and American accents. The intent was to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the efficacy of utilizing either British or American accent in educational contexts, particularly in the enhancement of listening comprehension skills. The post-test, therefore, played a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of the accent-focused treatments in influencing the students' listening abilities.

In this study, American and British accents were utilized, it's important to note that a consistent source material was employed throughout the entire research process encompassing the pre-test, treatment, and post-test phases. The chosen source material was "Oxford Practice Tests for the TOEIC Test," specifically the fifth impression of the book released in 2003.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher utilized a quasi-experimental design. This research was conducted in IAIN Ponorogo in the academic year 2022/2023 with a population of second semester students. Four classes were selected by the researcher to be used and divided into two groups. The combined number of students in each group was 87, with 42 students in the British accent group and 45 students in the American accent group.

Students in the British accent group were instructed utilizing British accent in learning listening comprehension. In this group, the researcher collected the students' pre-test results during the initial meeting. The researcher followed by giving the treatment during second

meeting, third meeting, and fourth meeting. The researcher then finally collected the post-test results at the last meeting. Same goes with the American accent group, the only difference here is that this group used the American accent in learning listening comprehension.

After gaining all the data researcher then proceeded to process it in SPSS 25 then run the Assumption Tests. The tests that were conducted were Normality and Homogeneity Test. The calculation of normality test of the British accent group by using Kolmogorov Smirnov can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. The Result of The Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		USscore	UKscore
N		90	83
Normal Parameters^{a,b}	Mean	52.4556	51.2410
	Std. Deviation	14.30107	13.23759
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.132	.127
	Positive	.132	.127
	Negative	-.073	-.066
Test Statistic		.132	.127
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.001 ^c	.002 ^c
a. Test distribution is Normal .			
b. Calculated from data.			
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.			

Confirming homogeneity is crucial for accurate comparisons and reliable research conclusions. In this study, the homogeneity test was conducted using the SPSS 25 version program, which effectively analyzed the data and enabled the examination of potential disparities among the groups. The aim was to ensure the groups were comparable, enhancing the validity and meaningfulness of the research findings. The calculation can be seen in the table below:

Table 2. The Homogeneity of Variance Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variances					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
score	Based on Mean	4.349	3	169	.006
	Based on Median	3.881	3	169	.010
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.881	3	148.831	.010
	Based on trimmed mean	4.251	3	169	.006

Following the assessment of normality and homogeneity, the researcher proceeded to test the formulated hypotheses by comparing the post-test scores from each group. The hypotheses were structured to effectively interpret the collected data. They are outlined below:

- The Null Hypothesis $H(0)$: “there will be significant effectiveness between British and American accent used in listening comprehension”
- The Alternative Hypothesis $H(1)$: “there will be no significant effectiveness between British and American accent used in listening comprehension”

These hypotheses were constructed to rigorously analyze the data and ascertain if there were discernible disparities in post-test scores between the groups exposed to British and American accents. The aim was to determine the influence of each accent on students' listening comprehension and infer if one accent had a more pronounced impact than the other.

H(0) was accepted if the score of the Sig. value is lower than 0.05. The researcher used one-way ANOVA to analyze the data by using SPSS 25 program. The calculation results as follow:

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
score					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8610.544	3	2870.181	20.190	.000
Within Groups	24024.658	169	142.158		
Total	32635.202	172			

After running the data through ANOVA test, it showed us that the Sig. value was exactly 0,00 which was clearly smaller than 0,05. With this we can conclude that the hypothesis null(H0) was accepted, and we can safely assume that **“there is a significant effect between different kind of accent used in listening comprehension”**.

The study initially suggested that British and American accents significantly influence students' listening comprehension. To gain a more nuanced understanding, detailed analysis of specific accent impacts was conducted. This thorough exploration aimed to uncover precise effects of each accent on students' comprehension.

Following this, a comprehensive analysis was conducted for each accent group individually. Utilizing the independent sample T-test, the researcher sought rigorous and quantitative insights into the impacts of each accent on students' listening comprehension, aiming to reveal significant differences or patterns in how the accents affected their comprehension abilities.

The results of this analysis are outlined below, presenting a comprehensive view of the effects of both accents on listening comprehension.

Table 4. T-Test Independent Sample Test of The British Accent Group

Independent Samples Test							
	t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.802	.183	-4.27	81	.000	-11.28455	2.64167
Equal variances not assumed			-4.27	77.528	.000	-11.28455	2.64167

From the provided table and in alignment with the earlier statement, the significance value (sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 is observed, which is below the common significance threshold of 0.05. This reconfirms that utilizing accents in students' listening comprehension has a substantial and statistically significant effect. Additionally, analyzing the mean difference, it is evident that the average score for the British accent group increased by 11.28. This data

further emphasizes the positive impact of employing the British accent in enhancing students' listening comprehension abilities.

Table 5. T-Test Independent Sample Test of The American Accent Group

Independent Samples Test							
t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	10.847	.001	-6.50	88	.000	-16.20000	2.49215
Equal variances not assumed			-6.50	69.130	.000	-16.20000	2.49215

The Sig(2-tailed) value obtained, .000, falling below the standard significance level of 0.05, confirms the substantial influence of the American accent on students' listening comprehension. This statistical significance underscores the American accent's effectiveness in enhancing students' understanding throughout the study, evidenced by a significant average score increase of 16.2 points within the American accent group.

Upon thorough examination of the data, it's evident that both accents notably impact students' listening comprehension. Analyzing the figures shows a slightly higher improvement in the average score for the American accent group (16.2 points) compared to the British accent group (11.28 points). While both accents positively affect comprehension, the American accent appears to have a slightly more pronounced impact on enhancing students' listening abilities.

Results consist of the research findings, including description of the collected data, analysis of the data, and interpretation of the data using the relevant theory. It should be clear and concise. Discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of English language learning, mastering language skills involves reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Among these, mastering listening is often considered the most challenging skill due to its dynamic and interactive nature. Listening holds immense significance as it involves receiving and understanding spoken words, context, intonation, and intended messages. It's an interactive process vital for successful communication and significantly influences speaking and writing abilities, highlighting its critical role in language learning.

Amid the array of English accents, British and American accents are widely recognized. Students often feel more at ease with the accent they are familiar with due to exposure through media, education, or their environment. However, the research contradicted this belief. Analysis revealed that both British and American accents significantly affect students' listening comprehension, challenging the notion that familiarity alone determines ease of understanding. This finding emphasizes the complex impact of accents on students' ability to interpret auditory information, indicating the need for a more thorough examination to understand their influence on language learners.

The research concluded that introducing various accents significantly impacted the listening comprehension of second-semester English students at IAIN Ponorogo. Observations indicated a noticeable effect on students' comprehension levels, with a subtle advantage for the American accent over the British accent. While both accents enhanced comprehension, students seemed to slightly benefit more from exposure to the American

accent during listening exercises. This distinction suggests that accent choice plays a role in improving listening comprehension teaching. These findings emphasize the importance of selecting suitable accents in education to enhance language learning outcomes, emphasizing the potential benefits of diverse accents in language curricula.

This result is almost similar to another research conducted by Choirusubhi in 5th semester ELED class of UMM, where in his qualitative research using interview many students feels like they prefer to learn English by using American accent rather than British accent due to various reasons (Choirusubhi, 2020).

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