

Students' English Score: Receptive Skills Comparison

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Abstract: English proficiency test is one of various ways to measure students' ability in English skills. This study aims to describe non-English department students' proficiency in English by analyzing their scores in listening and reading comprehension tests. The data were obtained from the test results of 115 students from five different majors. The results of the proficiency test scored showed that fifty-six students meet the standard required by the university. It was found that the listening score is higher than reading score. It indicates that students still have difficulties answering questions of reading. The average score is still lower than the standard for graduation requirement at Universitas Internasional Batam. As a result, it is necessary to implement appropriate teaching methods as well as to conduct intensive English test course.

Keywords: Receptive Skills, English Test, Listening, Reading

INTRODUCTION

Receptive skills are considered important as English learners need to have oral production as good as listening comprehension and to acquire information in all educational contexts through reading. Once learners get ready to produce language, teachers should assess them to measure their ability in both skills. Listening comprehension assessment examines students' ability to listen for basic interpersonal, instructional and academic purposes (Varma, 2016). Varma (2016) states that some sub-skills of listening which need to be assessed are listening for specific information, listening for general understanding, predictive listening, inferential listening, listening for pleasure, intensive listening and extensive listening.

On the other hand, reading assessment tests some sub-skills including reading for detail, reading for gist, reading for specific information, predicting content, and inferring meaning from content and context (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003).

There are many options for teachers to assess their students' receptive skills. The easiest way is by using TOEIC test. TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is an English proficiency test for people whose native language is not English. It assesses one's everyday English skills in an international environment, specifically in his/her working environment. TOEIC test result indicates how well students can communicate in English with others in the context of business, commerce, and industry (ETS, 2015).

In Indonesia, university students must take English course in the first year of their university education, including students at Universitas Internasional Batam (UIB). They take English course in their first and second semesters. At the end of academic year, students have English test which will decide whether they pass English requirement of the university or not. The English test at UIB is called UTEP (UIB Test of English Proficiency) in which UIB students must pass the standardized score to be able to graduate. The test items of UTEP are taken from TOEIC test. There are a hundred questions consisting fifty questions for each skill.

The listening section measures how well students understand spoken English, and the reading section examines how well they understand written English. The reason why TOEIC test is used in UTEP is because the test demonstrates English listening and reading skills which is useful for better employment opportunities. The fact that most of students at UIB are workers makes the test become the most suitable one to help them gain a competitive advantage in the global workplace.

Nevertheless, when it comes to standardization of the university, some of the students still got unsatisfactory results. It was found from the results of the UTEP preparation class at sessions 5 and 6, only 285 of the 557 students met the requirement. From this finding, the researcher aims to conduct a study regarding receptive skills in UTEP test. To find out UIB students' English ability, this paper will describe the phenomena based on the following research questions:

1. In which skill UIB's students have higher score?
2. How are the students' scores in UTEP?

It is expected that the findings of this study will help lecturers to select appropriate teaching strategies, so the students' English skills will be able to meet the global work specification.

METHOD

This research employed qualitative approach. According to Given (2008), qualitative approaches are typically used to explore new phenomena and to capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process. Since the data were taken from students' score, the writer used descriptive statistic in analysing them. In qualitative research, descriptive statistics is used to explain the characteristics of a sample or to explain the relationships among variables in a sample (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Specifically, it allows researchers to give another context, a richer picture or enhanced representation in examining specific phenomenon (Given, 2008).

There were 115 students' scores analysed in this research. The students were from different majors; civil engineering, electrical engineering, accounting, management and law. The scores were categorized based on the skill in which later were explained by comparing the skills and the majors of the students. The scores were taken from the UTEP score of first-year students at Universitas Internasional Batam. The test was conducted on May 19, 2018 consisting of a hundred questions of listening and reading. Listening sections consisted of four parts; photographs, question & response, conversations, and talks. Additionally, reading sections were divided into three parts; incomplete sentences, text completion, and reading comprehension.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Listening Test Results

To assess students by using UTEP (UIB Test of English Proficiency), the lecturers had to conduct the listening part first. There were four sections of listening; photographs, question & response, short conversations, and short talks. These types of questions helped students to focus totally on speakers' words without missing specific information. Table 1 below showed the results of students' listening score.

Table 1. Listening Section

Major	Number of Students	Average Score
Civil Engineering	26	44.24
Electrical Engineering	9	42.33
Accounting	38	39.95
Management	17	35.47
Law	25	30.42
Total Score	115	38.37

The average score results of civil engineering and electrical engineering were 44.24 and 42.33, in which the students of civil engineering had the highest average score. On the other hand, accounting and management students showed 39.9 and 35.47 as their average score. Law students had the lowest average score as they got 29.85. The overall average score in listening test was 38. 37. From the results of listening part, the students got difficulties in answering question in 2 sections: short conversation and short talks. However, it is necessary to conduct another research in order to get data about the students’ difficulties answering listening questions.

Reading Test Results

After finishing listening test, students continued to answer reading questions which consisted of three sections. The reading part of UTEP test assessed students’ vocabulary and grammatical understanding as well as their reading speed since it has three different sections; incomplete sentences, text completion, and reading comprehension.

The students’ achievement in reading has been shown from their test results. Table 1 below shows the reading test results from students at UIB:

Table 2. Reading Section

Major	Number of Students	Average Score
Civil Engineering	26	35.96
Electrical Engineering	9	37.6
Accounting	38	34
Management	17	25.41
Law	25	20.42
Total Score	115	30.71

From the Table 1, the total average score was 30.71. The students of civil engineering could answer 36 out of 50 listening questions as the average score was 35.96. Electrical engineering students had average score 37.6. On the other hand, two majors in Faculty of Economy, Accounting and Management, got 34 and 25.41 simultaneously. Finally, the average score of law students was 20.59. It can be said that students from electrical engineering had better reading score compare to other major since the average score is the highest one. From this result, the students have problem in reading parts in which it is necessary to conduct further analysis regarding their reading problems. However, from their answer, it was shown that their main

problem was vocabulary. They had difficulties completing sentence and identifying appropriate words based on the contexts.

Receptive Skills Results

Table 3. Overall Listening and Reading Score

Number of Students	Total Average Score of Listening	Total Average Score of Reading
115	38.25	30.37

As one of the research questions aims to compare listening and reading skill of students, it is analyzed and shown on the Table 3. Listening section had higher result compared to reading section. The students’ average score in listening is 38.25, while average score in reading is 30.27. It implies that there is a gap between students’ listening and reading ability in which they need more practice and exposure to reading comprehension. Their auditory capability has been proven better than comprehension of written text ability.

This result is also clearly displayed in Table 1 and Table 2 that the students from five different majors have higher score in listening section than reading section. The highest score of listening was achieved by civil engineering students with average 44. Meanwhile, the highest reading score was achieved by electrical engineering with the average score 37.6. From 115 students who took the test, only fifty-six students passed English requirement score. Consequently, students who have not met the standard score have to join special English class. Both receptive skills have become the main concern of the English lecturers at UIB because the main purpose of English course is to help UIB’s students to achieve the standardized score.

By comparing students’ receptive skills, it was later found that there was gap in students’ success. In listening part, the gap between the highest and the lowest score was 14 points. This gap became wider as the gap in reading section was 17 points. The lowest score in both skills was earned by law students. As a result, there is a real need to improve students’ abilities and the effectiveness of English class used to expose receptive skills.

Interestingly, the result of this study is different from what has been written by Harris et al. (2001) who stated that reading skill is easier than listening. It is because in listening skill, students do not have adequate control over the comprehension of speech trail. Meanwhile, students can go back to different words or phrases in reading. In addition, in listening, students need to comprehend oral input which is quick and temporary. The higher score in listening showed that UIB students were able to process audio input automatically and to reach a reasonable degree of comprehension.

Many studies have found out about reading difficulties experienced by English learners. Shehu (2015) wrote down four difficulties in reading comprehension. They were vocabulary, working memory, absence of extensive reading, and types of text. This finding is also supported by Fauziati (2016) who aimed to obtain a comprehensive description on aspects related to the TOEIC test items. The research concluded that vocabulary is crucial for success in the reading section of TOEIC test since vocabulary occupies 50% of the test. It is obvious that UTEP test which has TOEIC test format needs students’ mastery in vocabulary, which means, the students need exposure of vocabulary during teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, while the students are more advanced in their listening skill, most of them did not cross the required English

standardized score. It implies that students need more practice in answering TOEIC questions. Both their listening and reading skills should be further developed, particularly for reading skill.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study showed that students' reading skill was lower than their listening skill. This result was found in five majors at UIB. It indicates that students still have difficulties in answering reading questions. They were also unable to grasp meanings from the reading texts. English lecturers have responsibility to encourage their students in answering receptive skills proficiency test, specifically reading section. However, it is also necessary to help student to achieve standardized score of English, so that they can pass the UTEP score which has become the graduation requirement.

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