BOTTOM-UP APPROACH OF TEACHER'S BEST PRACTICE TO AVOID STUDENT'S PERPLEXITY IN LISTENING

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ABSTRACT

This best practice aims to find out teachers' practice on the bottom-up approach in teaching listening to EFL students at the higher education level, to find out students' perplexity on listening, and to find out students' responses on the bottom-up approach in teaching listening. The bottom-up approach has been practiced due to students' perplexity in figuring out some linguistic features such as short and long vowels, word linking, diverse English accents, diction, and many others which are not available in EFL students' native language. Thus, the students frequently have perplexity in those aspects. This perplexity occurs due to linguistic features in English are being far different from the ones in the Indonesian language. This qualitative research employed one English teacher who is particularly in charge of teaching listening and ten freshman students. The finding revealed that a bottom-up approach to the freshman classes is given until they get used to it so that they can get well-prepared to have a top-down approach to listening and students' responses indicate that they no longer have perplexity about listening to English native speakers. The conclusion showed that before teaching listening with a top-down approach, a bottom-up approach would be initially practiced. The Bottom-Up approach has been applied to prevent EFL students from perplexity in listening and they will be ready to face other techniques such as listening for gist, specific information, and detail.

Keywords: bottom-up approach, teaching listening, EFL students' perplexity

INTRODUCTION

Listening is the most significant receptive skill in learning English. We possibly spend more time listening to native speakers than any other kind of skill (Wilson, 2008). Like other skills, listening needs more practice and that is why real listening is an active process as well as it needs extra focus (Buck, 2001). It makes sense because EFL students practice listening to native speakers of English which is not their native language (Hadijah & Shalawati, 2018). Azmi et.al, (2014) stated that listening as a language basic skill is important as a receptive skill to build the development of spoken language proficiency. Walker (2014) clarified that listening is viewed from two perspectives. Listening for comprehension and acquisition. The former is aimed to have natural listening which means just to achieve the comprehension of the spoken discourse and the latter is aimed to furnish other skills like speaking.

Listening comprehension is a natural way of thinking when listening to a native speaker of English. This is in line with the hypothesis that listening mostly functions as a second language learning to figure out spoken discourse (Goh & Yusnita, 2006). To achieve the stage of understanding discourse, we have to consider some spoken discourse characteristics.

Spoken discourse often makes EFL listeners shocked as being very fast and dialogue can contain up to 250 words per minute even if it may vary considerably. In other words, spoken discourse is usually sudden (McCarthy & Carter, 2014). Spoken discourse can also be authentic and pedagogic. The former means natural, instantaneous, and unplanned. It also often reflects the construction process with repetition, doubt, and reduced forms. The latter is usually scripted and planned as well as sometimes the speed can be understandable because it is usually constructed for EFL listeners (Graham, 2006). Thus, a certain teaching strategy is required to make EFL students understand any spoken discourse from a native speaker of English at different speeds authentically or pedagogically.

The main umbrella of teaching listening is taken from the theory of Vygotsky who has the concept that acquisition and participation were supposed to be hand in hand in learning situations. Vygotsky has a theory called cognitive constructivism that upholds that knowledge is actively developed by the learners (Karpuza & Emvalotis, 2019). They do not receive from the environment. Thus, in teaching listening, cognitive constructivism is reflected when EFL learners are given authentic materials such as dialogues and talks from native speakers. The purpose is to introduce native sound and spelling followed by expression, intonation, and wording. EFL learners will watch, observe, and practice those aspects.

However, listening is not just like other skills. Many EFL learners fail to achieve comprehension of the discourse message (Thornbury et. al, 2006). Some factors give impact the students' listening skills, namely; less practice, limited vocabulary, native speakers' accents, pronunciation, monotonous learning materials, and a monotonous teaching approach (Coskun, 2010). Furthermore, EFL students' knowledge dealing with English structure and good conveniences in listening classes do not reinforce them to be able to understand some challenges in the listening process. Therefore, assistance from the teachers and some other students was still required in the teaching and learning activities (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In another word, being good at listening to native speakers still seems to be a challenge (Saraswati, 2018). Thus, listening is difficult and it needs a particular teaching approach to achieve good student listening outcomes.

One of the listening approaches to be discussed is the bottom-up approach. The bottom-up approach is a model of teaching listening emphasizing the decoding process of the smallest unit of phonemes and syllables (El-Dali, 2017). It also may analyze some basic aspects such as diverse English accents, word linking, and word stress. Even though the bottom-up approach in teaching listening is no longer a current issue to be discussed in the scope of teaching listening (Carrie & Mckenzie, 2017), however, to some certain extent, it is still practiced due to some students' perplexities encountered during the process of teaching listening. They said that they heard '*back*' instead of '*backyard*', '*Ice cream*' instead of '*I scream*', and 'Indonesian' instead of 'in donation' (in a certain context). Some others said that their senior high school English teachers claimed that the correct pronunciation for the sound /a/ in such words as 'class, glass, grass must be /kles/, /gres/, and /gles/ not /klɑ:s/, /grɑ:s/ and /glɑ:s/. Those English teachers probably were not aware that the latter belongs to the British accent and the former belongs to the American accent, even though the correct ones must be /klæs/, /græs/, and /glæs/ (Kelly, 2000). Another perplexity came up when they listen and the expression /yuwənai/ read as /you and I/, /jyulaikit/ read as /do you like it/, and many others. In terms of short and long vowels, when they listen to English audio and they have to retell it, they still mispronounce which can lead to different meanings, such as the word /beach/, /sheet/, and/lead/ which they pronounce /bitʃ/, /ʃit /, /lid/ instead of pronouncing /bi:tʃ/, /ʃi:t/, /li:d/ (Burgdorf & Tilsen, 2021).

Based on the students' perplexity previously mentioned, the teacher found it necessary to practice a bottom-up approach in teaching listening primarily to freshman classes. However, this teaching model takes only two sessions at the beginning, or 14% because there is a particular course called pronunciation practice given in semesters three and four, while the bottom-up listening of the freshman class is introduced in grade one. Only the basic points are given because the students will get core complete pronunciation in semesters three and four.

The following approach in teaching listening can use a top-down model or whatever in turn-taking without any hesitation. The students can listen to any kind of text available on the internet with full understanding. This is good for their listening outcome. If they have no barrier in listening to English, it means they can be well prepared to be good translators or interpreters apart from being English teachers. Therefore, this research tries to investigate the teacher's strategy in practicing a bottom-up approach to teaching listening, students' perplexity in listening, and students respond to the teacher's strategy in bottom-up listening.

METHODS

This research article employs a qualitative research design because it is the best way to have a depth-analysis understanding of the best practice (Creswell, 2012). This research also engaged the interview with 10 freshman students and classroom observation in the Listening class of English education of a university in West Java, Indonesia. Thus, data collection for this research consisted of interviews and classroom observation. An interview was conducted to reveal the students' perplexity in listening. Meanwhile, the observation was carried out to find out the teaching listening strategy applied by the teacher. The research analysis adopted data triangulation to crosscheck the observation data and interview data that generate research findings (Noble & Heale, 2019) as data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data from online classroom observation, teaching listening employed the bottom-up approach and continued to the top-down approach based on constructed rubrics. It is essential to realize teaching strategies that are often established in the form of constructed rubrics (Coskun, 2010). The reason why rubric is employed in this best practice is its practicability makes it easy to follow up. Furthermore, a rubric also is used in teaching syllabi because it does not need a long explanation which is difficult to figure out. Here are some ideas constructed and practiced for teaching listening, which is only conducted just for sessions one and two and only in whilst and posts activities. In session one, pre-activity is not too highlighted because it always consists of greeting, introducing the learning syllabus and course regulation, as follows:

Table 1. Session one

Pre-activity		
Greeting, introducing the learning syllabus, and course regulation		
Whilst-activities		
Item of teaching	**Strategy**	**Type of audio**
Minimal pairs, unfamiliar phonetic sounds such as /f/, /v/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, diphthongs, short vowels, and long vowels.	• Introducing English audios containing aspects of an item of teaching • Making comparison between Indonesian and English phonological systems • Practicing them	Phonological audio, English dialogue, and talk
Post-activities		
	• Checking students' understanding, • giving assignment • making conclusion	

Regarding session one as presented in table 1, the teaching strategy is classified into pre-activity, whilst activity, and post-activity (Malkawi & Abeer H, 2010). Due to the beginning of the semester, pre-activity only embeds general courses such as General talk, introducing learning syllabus, and course regulation. The main core occurs in whilst-activity. The focus is on minimal pairs, unfamiliar phonetic sounds such as /f/, /v/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, diphthongs, short vowels, and long vowels. The purpose of giving those materials came from students' misunderstanding during listening. They wondered to figure out the correct pronunciation between /glɑ:s/ and /glæs/, the difference between /f/, /v/, and /p/, how to differentiate minimal pairs which are confusing, and many others.

Table 2. Session two

Pre-activities		
Item of teaching	**Strategy**	**Type of audio**
The previous material (Minimal pairs, unfamiliar phonetic sounds such as /f/, /v/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, diphthongs, short vowels, and long vowels)	A brief review of the assignment	
Whilst-activities		
Word linking, word stress, diverse English accents	• Introducing English audios containing aspects of an item of teaching • Making analysis and discussion • Practicing them	English audio and video of dialogue and talk
Post-activities		
	• Checking students' understanding, • Giving assignment • Making conclusion	

Regarding session two as can be seen in table 2, the teaching strategy is classified into pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity. Pre-activity in session two usually gives the students the to memorize what they had learned in the previous session. Those activities are review and brainstorming. The teacher will ask questions or invite students to respond. This is the important part because the material in sessions one and two are interconnected. Thus, the teacher must put the students' understanding first before moving on to the next material.

Whilst-activity provides word linking, word stress, and diverse English accents to be discussed. The significance of those scopes is the EFL students will be well-prepared to listen to a native speaker informal or non-formal setting with British and American accents. The students will have more analysis on those aspects since that listening to English makes them more aware of many new things that they didn't know before. Analysis of word linking, word stress, and diverse English accents from listening will automatically affect the way they speak English. This is one of the most important language acquisitions in Listening (Slobin, 1985).

In post-activity, the teacher will check students' understanding of the whole course from session one to session two considering that from session three to session fourteen, the students will have a top-down approach that requires more focus. It is expected that the students will not hit any barriers again in listening.

One of the most significant elements in teaching listening is holistic assessment. The assessment must reflect all teaching materials given to EFL learners (Harmer, 2007). The

writer designed the outline for assessment components (particularly bottom-up listening) as follows:

Table 3. Listening Assessment Rubric

No	Listening assessment	Assessment components		
1	Pronunciation	Linking sound	Weak sound	Word stress
2	Accent	British or American accent	Other accents	
3	Vocabulary	Word Construction	Diction	
4	Context	Guessing the speaker's identity	The setting	The activity occurred
5	Purpose of the talks	Interpretation of the speakers' expression	Interpretation of the speakers' purpose	Guessing the end of the talk

Based on table3, the Bottom-up approach to listening is not only applied in the teaching process, but also in assessment starting with pronunciation in which the questions deal with phonological aspects. Then, gradually it increases to guess accent. This is very important to avoid students' perplexity in interpreting to guess that one accent is the most international standardized accent. Vocabulary is the next level to analyze in listening since EFL learners must understand the correct diction for the correct context. The level of pronunciation, accent, and vocabulary belongs to listening acquisition. Following up is the context of a sentence that is analyzed in listening which is included in listening comprehension. The bottom level is the purpose of the talk and the context of the audio which is also included in listening comprehension. The test can be an essay, multiple-choice, or sentence completion. The bottom-up approach in assessing listening is in line with what Buck (2001) said that the bottom-up approach must be applied not only in the teaching process but also in an assessment to measure whether that approach has been proper and successfully employed in teaching listening. In short, the finding of the first question detailed how the teacher initially and dominantly practiced a bottom-up approach before a top-down approach in teaching listening.

The finding of the second research question was obtained from interview data with ten freshmen students. The second research question was 'What is students' perplexity in listening?' the answers obtained from ten students were varied and their answers were sorted and classified into three aspects. Their sorted answers consist of perplexity on two major English accents, English pronunciation, and English diction. They said that they are confused about English accents due to British and American accents are different in some points, such as in vocabulary and pronunciation. The detail can be seen in table 4 as follows:

Table 4. Students' perplexity in listening

No	Classification of students' perplexity	Number of students
1	Two major English accents	10
2	English pronunciation	10
3	English diction	10

From table 4 it can be seen that ten students have perplexity with two major English accents which occurs because English has two major accents. They are American English

and British English. They often asked which English accent belongs to standardized international English, so they can focus on learning it. In point two, ten students have perplexity with English pronunciation occurs because students are not familiar with English phonological systems, such as the sound of /f/, /v/, /gh/ in enou**gh**, /ph/ in /**ph**one/, /kn/ in /**kn**ow/, /θ/ in /**th**ree/, and so on. Students are also not familiar with short and long vowels such as in words /*beach*/ and /*bitch*/. The former has a long /i:/ and the latter has a short /i/ in pronunciation. If they are mispronounced, the meaning will be different. In English pronunciation, there are still some aspects that make students perplexed, such as word stress, linking sounds, and many others. In point three, ten students were perplexed about how to use proper English diction. For example, students used to consider /*I couldn't agree more*/ as /*I don't agree*/. In fact, it has the opposite meaning as /*I do agree*/. This kind of perplexity always comes up in listening.

The finding of the third research question relates to students' responses on the bottom-up strategy the teacher practices in listening class. Based on the interview data of research question number three, ten students agree with the bottom-up approach in the listening class. They explained that the bottom-up approach guided them to develop their understanding of native-speaker talks.

The findings of this research have revealed that the Bottom-Up approach was more dominantly applied than the Top-Down approach in listening class. This is probably due to most students' perplexity coming from the linguistic features in the listening process. Thus, the Bottom-Up approach is closely relevant to overcome students' perplexity compared to the Top-Down approach which just explores students' competence in understanding the message of English native speakers' talks. The second next finding showed that ten students got perplexity ranging from various English accents, English pronunciation, and English diction. This is probably due to American culture massively coming to Indonesia in the form of Hollywood movies, American music, games, Facebook, YouTube, and so on. All bring American culture including American English. No wonder, when students received listening material with British dialogue, they got into perplexity. The third finding showed that students agree with the Bottom-Up approach in listening class. They explained that the bottom-up approach could develop their understanding of native-speaker talks. This is probably due to they get a detailed explanation of English linguistics features in the Bottom-Up approach. After they build their understanding of the existence of English linguistics features, they find it easy to understand English native speakers' talks in the Top-Down approach in listening class.

The main reason why the bottom-up approach is fostered is that its processing input is in line with what is needed in teaching listening in the freshman class. The processing input in the bottom-up approach, according to Clare & Wilson (2006), consists of some stages as follows:
1. Hold phonological representation in working memory,
2. Manage phonological representation (PR) into elements,
3. Categorize each element and build underlying prepositions,
4. Mark working memory and remove it from the phonological symbol,
5. Leave the wording and work with the meaning.

The five stages are half adopted. The teacher just highlights stage one, stage four which is altered with wording, and stage five. First, put PR in the students' memory until they get used to it. This is very important for the teacher to initially introduce PR to some phonetic systems which are not familiar in the Indonesian language, such as the sound of /v/, /f/, /ʃ/, /ð/ in this and either, /θ/ in /think/ (Herlina & Faridah, 2021). Sound/v/ and /f/ are available in the Indonesian phonetic system but most Indonesian students assimilate them with the sound /p/. They even find it hard to pronounce them. Stage four, wording, constructs all PR to words. In this stage the role of word stress, intonation, and diverse English accents is important. The fact is that students always misunderstand those three aspects during listening. The teacher emphasizes introducing diverse audio with diverse accents. They are usually three main accents, namely, the British accent, the American accent, and the Australian accent (Han, 2018). The teacher does not give a detailed explanation about diverse English accents

considering that the students are not majoring in Linguistics. They just receive adequate knowledge to make them aware that diverse English accents exist indeed. Stage five is the turn for the meaning or the message of any sentence, text, or discourse. This is the top stage where the students seldom find any barrier to understanding any English audio since they have adequate basic knowledge of English phonology.

This current research is in line with Furuya's research (2019) which focuses on the practice of the Bottom-Up approach to listening. The difference is Furuya's research compared Top-Down and Bottom-Up in listening to children whose age range between 8-13 years old, focusing on the Top-Down approach more than the Bottom-Up approach.

CONCLUSION

Good listening skill means being good at comprehending the information during the listening process. However, listening is still deemed the most difficult basic skill for EFL learners although they have been studying English for a few years. Thus, this paper is intended as a best practice for a Bottom-Up approach to teaching listening, particularly for freshman classes. The bottom-up approach employs interpreting English linguistics features ranging from as diverse English accents, pronunciation, and English Diction. The teaching strategy used in the bottom-up approach is elaborated into pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity. The bottom-up teaching strategy is only given for two sessions for a particular reason. The assessment of listening also reflects a Bottom-Up approach consisting of the components of pronunciation, accent, and diction. In short, the bottom-up approach, as the best practice, can enhance EFL students' listening skills and it is highly recommended that the teacher uses the bottom-up approach to teach listening to EFL students in freshman classes.

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