

Redesigning the 21st century Listening Test to Stimulate Students' Critical Thinking: A Case Study

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Abstract: The study aimed at redesigning the 21st century listening test to stimulate students' critical thinking. It was a case study done throughout several phases with the object was the final test of listening 2 course in *Universitas PGRI Semarang*, Indonesia. Documents review were done to collect the data, then descriptively reviewed and analyzed. The theories of cognitive domain, listening test type, and listening processing were used as the indicators. 4 parts of questions were composed; part A (analyzing, intensive, bottom up); part B (analyzing, selective, bottom up); part C (evaluating, responsive, top down); part D (creating, extensive, top down). These findings may become a model of listening test to prepare students' readiness to face the 21st century workforce, then, listening will be seen as a challenging and interesting subject, not as a subject that can be neglected and underrated.

Keywords: Redesigning, 21st Century Skills, Listening Test, Critical Thinking, Case Study

1. Introduction

The preceding study showed that listening skill remains a crucial issue for English learners in Indonesia especially *Universitas PGRI Semarang*, Central Java, Indonesia, and it resulted the lowness of their listening grades [1], as well as the result of the observation which gave the researchers evidence that the syllabus of the Listening 2 subject in *Universitas PGRI Semarang* is still on the understanding (C-2) level. As required in higher education curriculum what is so called *KKNI (Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia)* or Indonesian National Qualification Framework, the graduates must possess the 21st century skills including collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving skill.

Critical thinking is a crucial 21st century skill [2]. In addition, Lai said "Critical thinking includes the component skills of analyzing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems"[3]. Therefore, critical thinking is an important skill that must be possessed by students to fulfil the 21st century needs. Meanwhile, the cognitive domain used in higher education also needs to be improved. It is no more in the level of remembering (C-1), understanding (C-2), and applying (C-3) but it must be higher that is on the level of analyzing (C-4), evaluating (C-5), and creating (C-6) [4]. Therefore, each course implemented in higher education curriculum must be integrated with those requirements.

Being critical in listening activity is also crucial as Walker highlights the important place that the teaching listening strategies should be ever increasingly assuming in the modern foreign language classroom [5]. Brown explained that you cannot observe the actual act of listening nor see or hear an actual product. Then, the assessment must be made on the basis of observing the test-taker's speaking or writing. So, all assessment of receptive performance

must be made by inference [6]. This is why most of listening activities consist of responsive exercises. Actually, listening exercises can also vary so the students will not get bored and their learning motivation toward listening subject becomes lower and lower.

Listening test is to assess how well students are able to understand the speech of speakers of the target language. It is also to assess how well students has mastered what has been taught. Hence, four commonly types of listening performance by Brown should be applied; they are intensive, responsive, selective, and extensive. Besides, two different kinds of processes should be involved in listening comprehension; bottom up and top down. Bottom up processing refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. It begins with the received data that is analyzed as successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, sentence, texts – until meaning is derived. Top down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of message [7]. Those can be integrated with cognitive domain of higher education level that is analysing, evaluating and creating. This combination can formulate “the 21st century listening test” as the figure 1 below.



Fig. 1. The Theory used to Formulated "The 21st Century Listening Test"

Considering the policy, it is crucial to explore the documents used in listening subject in order to set the students facing the 21st century needs since the quality of the students will remain lower than what workplace needs when the educational setting does not incorporate the 21st century skills in the curriculum. The described situation led the researchers' curiosity to conduct the present study which aimed at redesigning “the 21st century listening test” to stimulate students' critical thinking.

2. Methodology

It was a case study research design since it tried to describe the phenomena. Creswell stated that a case study focuses on a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program. The goal is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity (the “case”) [8]. By using case study research design, the researchers tried to bring out detail description and understanding about the process of redesigning “the 21st century listening test” with the purpose to stimulate students' critical thinking using the framework of the 21st century skills.

The object of the study was listening test used in *Universitas PGRI Semarang*, Central Java, Indonesia. The test is used by the lecturer at the end of the semester (final test). It took Listening 2 subject since the observation result showed that the syllabus of Listening 2 subject is still on second level of cognitive domain that is understanding (see figure 1).

Documents review became the data collection of the study. Some documents related to learning process were also reviewed and analyzed. They were teaching instruments such as

syllabus, lesson plan, and listening test which were reviewed and analyzed concurrently to find the suitable one that meets the need of the 21st century skills. The data yielded from this study were analyzed descriptively following the theory of Creswell. Since the aim of the study was to redesign, several phases of case study had been done to formulate “the 21st century listening test”. The process is presented in the following figure.

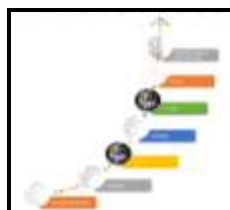


Fig. 2. The Process of Data Analysis

3. Findings and Discussion

It was mentioned earlier that the objective of this study was to redesign “the 21st century listening test” to stimulate students’ critical thinking in *Universitas PGRI Semarang*. Since the result of documents review gave some evidences that they were not suitable with the need of 21st century skills, or reflect the cognitive domain of the higher education level. The discrepancy of what kind of listening test is actually needed by the students and what was found in the site of the study led the researchers’ desire in redesigning listening test so called “the 21 century listening test”. The findings are elaborated below.

3.1 The Existed Listening Test

Since this study was focusing on redesigning listening test, so it is a must to analyse the existed listening test used by the lecturers of Listening 2 subject. It is found that the question items were only comprised top-down process that is finding out the main idea of spoken discourse. Since it is a final test, it should employ both processing in listening comprehension; bottom up and top down processing. It was also lack of variation as suggested by Brown. Moreover, the test should cover competencies for students to be ready facing Listening 2 subject.

3.2 Redesigning “The 21st Century Listening Test”

The redesigned listening test in this study was formulated based on theory on figure 1 that is cognitive domain used in KKNi based on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning, type of listening test, and processing in listening as the indicators of the redesign listening test. It was composed 4 (four) parts of questions as listed below.

Table 1. The Indicators of Redesigned Listening Test

QUESTION	COGNITIVE DOMAIN	TYPE OF TEST	PROCESSING	TIME ALLOTMENT
Part A	Analyzing	Intensive	Bottom up	3’
Part B	Analyzing	Selective	Bottom up	15’
Part C	Evaluating	Responsive	Top down	15’
Part D	Creating	Extensive	Top down	7’

Based on Table 1, the levels of cognitive domain used in higher education level were varied; analyzing was comprised on part A and B, evaluating was on part C, and creating was on part D. Intensive type belongs to part A, selective type belongs to part B, responsive type belongs to part C, and extensive part belongs to part D. The bottom up processing employed in questions part A and B, while the top down processing employed in questions part C and D. Time allotment of the test is 40' (fourty minutes) with 2 times repetition. Each part of the question is in detail explanation as follows:

The redesigned listening test was begun with part A which comprised analyzing, intensive and bottom up processing. The cognitive domain level was analyzing since the students were requested to distinguish the correct sounds based on the recording by crossing the correct answer. The cognitive domain of distinguish is exactly on the forth level that is analyzing. Brown stated that intensive listening at this level is the assessment of recognition of phonological and morphological elements of language, the statement was realized in part A question where students asked to distinguish the stimulus from three choices. The focus of this part is on the microskills of intensive listening using the technique of recognizing phonological and morphological elements. The example of part A question is as follows:

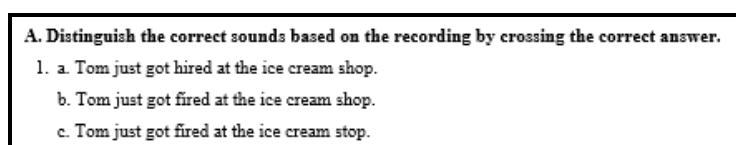


Fig. 3. The Example of Redesigned Listening Test (Part A)

By looking these options, students heard “Tom just got hired at the ice cream shop”. The phonological elements were realized between sounds /h/ and /f/ in “hired” and “shop”. Both sounds are fricative where the air is not blocked at any point which causes friction. Further, sound /h/ and /t/ in “shop” and “stop”. Friction is also occurred. This conditions made both sounds were similar, so students must be aware and well-listened. While the morphological elements were realized throughout the words “hired”, “fired”, “shop”, and “stop”.

Part B employed analysing, selective, and bottom up processing. Eventhough part A and B had the same level of cognition domain, but they were different in task. Part B asked students to select the correct images based on the recording by circling the correct answer. The cognitive domain of compare is also on the forth level of cognitive domain that is analyzing.

Selective requires the test-taker listens to a limited quantity of aural input and must discern within some specific information [6]. The statement was realized in part B question using the technique of information transfer where aurally processed information must be transferred to a visual representation, in this case comparing an element in a picture. Students asked to select the stimulus from four choices. The example of part B question is as follows:

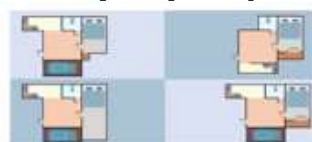


Fig. 4. The Example of Redesigned Listening Test (Part B)

By looking these options, students heard “which room are a husband and a wife going to see?” “It’s got a nice large living room”, “I want the parking space”, “Isn’t the closet a bit too small?”. “The closet is pretty large too”. The students needed to focus on just the relevant

information. The objective of this task is to test adjectives, adverb of quantity, and noun phrases (a nice large living room, a bit too small, pretty large, etc). Hence, students must be aware of what they listened and what they read.

Part C included evaluating, responsive, and top down processing. The cognitive domain level was evaluating since the students were requested to select the correct implication based on the recording by crossing the correct answer. The cognitive domain of selecting is exactly on the fifth level that is evaluating.

Responsive listening is a question-and-answer format which can provide some interactivity in the lower-end listening tasks [6]. The statement was realized in part C question where students' response is the appropriate answer to a question using a multiple-choice format. The objective of this item is recognition of the wh-question and its appropriate response. The example of part C question is as follows:

- a. The haircut is unusually short
- b. This is Bob's first haircut
- c. Bob doesn't know who gave him the haircut
- d. After the haircut, Bob's hair will still touches the floor

Fig. 5. The Example of Redesigned Listening Test (Part C)

First, students listen to a short dialogue by a man and a woman, then by looking these options, students heard "What seems to be true about Bob's haircut?", "How does Bob seem to feel about his haircut?", etc. The students needed to focus on the relevant information. The objective of this task is to test students' understanding about wh- information. Hence, they must be aware of what they listened and what they implied.

The last part of the redesigned listening test was part D. It employed creating, extensive and top down processing. Since creating is the highest level of cognitive domain, this part produced spoken output of student in formulating one's situation. Extensive listening is gradually move along the continuum from smaller to larger stretches of language, and from micro-to-macro skills of listening [6]. The statement was realized in part D question using communicative stimulus-Response Tasks. It is a popular genre of assessment task in which the test-taker is presented with a stimulus monologue and then is asked to respond to a set of comprehension orally. The example of part D question is as follows:

- D. Listen to Sandra, an American business student, talking about problem she experienced with work placement. Create answer orally based on your understanding.
- 1. What problem did Sandra have?
 - 2. What are the misunderstandings that caused this problem?

Fig.3. The redesigned listening test (Part D)

First, students listen a monologue then they answer a comprehension questions above orally (on an audiotape). The students should deliver the situation based on the listed questions. Scoring is partially predetermined by specifying a minimum number of elements that must appear in delivering answers. Hence, they must understand well the gist, main idea, purpose, supporting points, and/or conclusion to show full comprehension.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this study was aimed at redesigning “the 21st century listening test” to stimulate students’ critical thinking in *Universitas PGRI Semarang*. The findings showed that the existed listening test did not reflect the need of 21st century skills or the cognitive domain of the higher education level to make students ready to face the workplace. These findings might have implication to the development of “the 21st century listening test” to all level of education, so educators and students will see listening as a challenging and interesting subject, not as a subject that can be neglected and underrated.

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