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**THE EFFECT OF BACK-CHANNELING TECHNIQUE IN INCREASING  
STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL: EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH AT THE NINTH  
GRADE OF MTS AL MUKHTARY NW BUNGTIANG IN ACADEMIC YEAR  
2014/2015**



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**THE EFFECT OF USING BACK-CHANNELING TECHNIQUE IN INCREASING  
STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL: EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH AT THE NINTH  
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**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui keberhasilan penggunaan metode *Back-channel* dalam meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam hal mendengarkan. Penelitian ini didisain dengan model eksperimen dimana metode pengumpulan datanya didapatkan dari skor tes awal dan tes akhir. Jumlah sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 62 siswa yang terdiri dari 31 siswa sebagai kelas eksperimen dan 31 siswa sebagai kelas kontrol. Dalam pelaksanaannya, siswa kelas eksperimen diajar dengan menggunakan metode *Back-channel*, sedangkan siswa kelas control diajar dengan menggunakan metode dikte. Dalam pengumpulan data, peneliti melakukan tes awal dan tes akhir pada kedua kelas tersebut. Tes awal dilakukan untuk mengetahui homogenitas kemampuan siswa dan nilai rata-rata siswa sebelum dilakukan treatment; nilai rata-rata untuk kelas experiment adalah 68,55 sedangkan kelas control mendapatkan rata-rata 71,61. Setelah itu, kedua kelas akan diberikan perlakuan dan dilakukan tes akhir yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh dari penggunaan metode *Back-channel* dalam meningkatkan kemampuan siswa di bidang mendengarkan. pada akhirnya, hasil dari tes akhir menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata untuk kelas eksperimen adalah 79,35 sedangkan kelas control adalah 76,61. Selain daripada itu, didapatkan hasil t-Tes adalah 5,67 dan lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan t-Tabel. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa metode *Back-channel* efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam hal mendengarkan.

**Kata kunci:** kemampuan mendengarkan, metode *Back-channel*

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out whether or not the use of Back-channeling technique can increase students' listening skill. The design of this research was experimental research and data collection procedure used pre-test and post-test. The samples of the research were 62 students consisting of 31 students in experimental class and 32 students in control class. In conducting the research, the experimental class was taught by using back-channeling technique and control class was taught by using dictation technique (teacher's own technique). In data collection, the researcher did pre-test and post-test for both two classes. Pre-test was given to both groups to know the homogeneity and background of the students knowledge and average score both of group before giving treatment; the average score for experimental class is 68.55 and control class is 71.61. Both group were given treatment and then post test was conduct for both groups aiming to know the effect of back-channeling technique in increasing students' listening skill. Finally the result of post-test showed that the average score of experimental group was 79.35 and control group was 76.61. However, the result of t- test was 5.67 and higher than t-table at the confidence level 0.05 (95%) equal to 2.000 and the confidence level 0.01 (99%) equal to 2.660 in degree of freedom (*df*) of 60. It shows that back-channeling technique is effective in increasing students' listening skill.

**Key words: listening skill, back-channeling technique**

## A. INTRODUCTION

Language is important since it is a basic medium to communicate in this world. Without language, we will get difficulties to do our daily activities. Through language, people give and accept information, share ideas, and have comprehension in communication among people even in various cultural background.

English is categorized as a foreign language in Indonesia. Most people consider English as a new language and unfamiliar. It happens because of the differences between English and Indonesian both in grammatical rules and the pronunciation system of each language. Also, the unfamiliar vocabulary makes the language hard to be learnt.

Nowadays, the newest curriculum in Indonesia, called curriculum 2013, has been applied to develop students' skill in English. This curriculum allows teachers to understand the utilization of learning sources and other media they can use. Therefore the teachers should think creatively to teach although without any media and the students are demanded to be more active in process of teaching learning.

Among these four skills, listening plays an important role in communication. As Mandelshon (1994) said that from the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%. Although the teaching of listening comprehension has long been somewhat neglected and poorly taught aspect of English in many EFL program (Mendelsohn, 1994, p. 9), listening is now regarded as much more important in both EFL classrooms and SLA research. That is why most people argued that listening is anything in which the listener should be able to discriminate between

sounds, understand the meaning of each vocabulary and grammatical structures, decode stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterances.

Based on the pre-observation in the school object, it was found that teaching English is conducted only in way of written form without consolidating the oral activity like listening and speaking. The students were only given a rehearsal exercise after teacher gave them explanation about the topic on that day. As a result, the students are less competent in the case of listening and speaking. According to their teacher, this happened because that school has no sufficient media to do listening activity like loud-speaker and tape-recorder. Related to the problem above the researcher is interested to try a new technique in increasing their listening skill.

Regarding to the function as a teacher, helping students to increase their listening skill is a part of teachers' job. Giving them various activities and exercises is very needed to train their skill not only in reading and writing but also in listening and speaking. Moreover if one technique is not success to be applied in class because of no media, it should be changed to another technique. The use of back-channeling technique is suggested in this case because it does not need a media in doing the activity. Hopefully it will be able to increase their listening skill. Back-channeling technique is a way to show the listener's interest, attention and/or a willingness to keep listening by giving signs while someone else is talking. Back-channels are typically short utterances such as *uh-huh*. By using this technique, students, hopefully, will be more active in listening process so they will not get bored. In this case, students are demanded to keep focus on the conversation.

Knowing that teaching listening is important and not an easy case, the researcher would like to conduct an experimental research entitled "The Effect Of Back-Channeling Technique In Increasing Students' Listening Skill: Experimental Research At The Ninth Grade Of MTs Al-Mukhtary NW Bungtiang In Academic Year 2013/2014". This research aims to know whether back-channeling technique is effective to increase students' listening skill for the ninth grade of students at MTs Al-Mukhtary NW Bungtiang?". The Hypothesis of this research is "*back-channeling technique is effective in increasing students listening skill for the ninth grade of students at MTs Al-Mukhtary NW Bungtiang*".

## **Review of related literature**

In general, listening is a process of receiving messages from the speaker. In education, listening has a significant role particularly for linguistic. There are some opinions about listening by some experts, Underwood (1989) states the definition of listening as the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear. Moreover, Purdy (1997:9) defines listening as "the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal), needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings".

Kline (1996: 20) stated that there are five kinds of listening: (1) Informative Listening. It is a situation where the listener's primary concern is to understand the message. Listeners are successful insofar as the meaning they assign to message is as possible as to which the sender intended. Informative listening or listening to understand is found in all areas of our lives. A number of learning comes from informative listening. (2) Relationship

Listening. The purpose of relation listening is either to help an individual or to improve the relationship between people. Therapeutic listening is a special type of relationship listening. Although relationship listening requires us to listen for information, the emphasis is on understanding the other person. (3) Appreciative Listening. Appreciative listening includes listening to music for enjoyment, to speakers because we like their style. It is the response of the listener, not the source of the message that defines appreciative listening for me. I would rather listen to blues, jazz and dangdut. (4) Discriminative Listening. It may be the most important type, for it is basic to the other four. By being sensitive to changes in the speaker's rate, volume, pitch and emphasis, the informative listener can detect even nuances of difference in meaning.

There are several types of listening activities, some of them do not need response like producing language in example "close the door, answer the questions after listening to recording" an all those activities only need actions response. According to Aldridwicahsono (2011), listening without response is easier than need response because it will hard to repeat back what was we heard. However giving response in listening also a good way to teach listening or students. It is important to train their skill as an active communicator not only as passive. This technique can control students to keep listening and focus, because if they are in inattentive, they will lose the thread. In this case, one of the appropriate techniques is back channeling technique especially in listening for communication because as we have known, the aim of teaching this language is to be able to used in daily life conversation.

A good listening lesson needs sequence activities in arranging the step before and after listening. The basic structure usually used in teaching listening is:

- a) Before listening. In this stage, teacher prepare their students by introducing the topic and detect what they have known about it. An appropriate way to do it is from brainstorming and doing discussion related to topic and giving them with a relevant background information and new vocabulary used when they are listening.
- b) During listening. This second stage demands teacher to give specific explanation about what students need to listen. Students can listen for selective details even for general content, or for an emotional tone such as happy, surprised, or angry. If they are not marking answers or responding while listening, teacher should called up.
- c) After listening. At the end of this activity, teacher can ask students to make a group discussion, craft project, writing task, game, etc to measure their achievement. (Aldricwicahsono :2011)

Teaching listening of a new language, especially for beginners, could not be separated from problems. It is because the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intention, retain and interpret this within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance (Wipf: 1984). Another reason for why listening subject is difficult will explained by Underwood (1989). He states that some other difficulties that faced by students in listening is caused by learning habit factor. Building learning habits in the sense of listening to their teacher by and understanding to what their teacher said without giving response and always passive in process brings the result that when they fail to catch the meaning of what they listen, they will stop and lose the thread, which seems to be the reason why the students always panic and worrying before and during listening. Because of that, we cannot refuse that students focus plays an important part in teaching learning process.

Brown (2006:1) argues that theme in learning will create a motivation. Because listening is a challenging subject, teacher needs to think carefully about how to create a fun activities and make it successful with interesting topic.

Back channeling technique refers to active listening, means that the listener actively showing their enthusiasm of what the others talking about. Back channeling is an attractive technique in teaching listening process without affecting others' ideas. By this way, the listener will try to focusing their attention to the topic. Meanwhile this technique means interpreting what the speaker said, and we will use that interpretation to clarify the position of the speaker in conversation (Bob, 2014:32).

In Linguistic, back-channel is the activity in which the listener, during communication, responses to what the speaker says that can be both verbal and non-verbal in nature. The term 'back channel' in this research was design to entail that there are two channel of communication working concurrently during communication. The first channel is the speaker which has big contribution in doing this technique who directs primary speech flow. And the second channel of communication is the listener (or backchannel) which functions to provide continuers or assessments, in other word it is defining a listener's comprehension or interest (White, 1989).

There are three kinds of back-channel in this technique, these are:

1. Non-lexical back-channel is giving response by vocalize sounds that has actually little or no referential meaning but still verbalizes the listener's attention. For instance in English, sound like "uh-uh" and "hmm" serve this role.
2. Phrasal back-channel is commonly assess or acknowledge speaker's communication with simple words or phrases. The examples of this category in English like "really" or "wow!".
3. Substantive back-channel consist of substantial turn-taking during the conversation by the listener and usually apparent as asking for clarification and repetition.

In teaching learning process, as teacher, we need to think about how to present material in effective way to the students so that they will access and response well to the lesson. Because the teaching listening is the most difficult one in English course, so that it needs to find appropriate technique to make it easier. Since Indonesia focus on the communication purposes in English, back channeling technique is the best way to gain the aim itself because this technique is more focus on the achievement of the skills. It means that this technique is inclined to listening active rather passive listening which only listening without clear purpose.

It means that the process is only among students, students not only as the listener but also as the speaker. The procedures about how to apply this technique will described as follows:

1. Teacher explains to the students about topic they will discuss on that meeting. For examples, narrative or report.
2. Teacher divides the students into pair and each of students should have one story or text to told regarding to the topic that day.
3. Teacher ask them for listening to the story or text of their friends by turn. The process should be like a conversation, in this case the speaker as an informant who wants to share their story to their friends.

4. The listener, during the conversation, will give responses to their friend's story as a sign that the listener follows the story. The response can be non-lexical like 'uh-uh', phrasal like 'wow', and substantive back-channel like asking for clarification or repetition.
5. During listening, student should focus and allowed to take some notes of what they were hearing because it will help them to keep remember what they have heard by their friend's story.
6. Teacher asks them to answer some questions made by the speaker related to story or text and ask the speaker to correct.

By this technique, students will be motivated to keep listening because they involve to the conversation.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study belongs to experimental research because the researcher will investigate and analyze all the data they acquired after giving treatment to the students about the subject. Yusra (2009) states that the researcher can control and manipulate the conditions which determine the events in which they are interested freely. In line with that, Arikunto (2006) states that if the research occurrence are deliberately emerged by the research so it called experimental research. Moreover, he says that experimental research should be done purposely. Regarding to the statement, the purpose of this research is to obtain the effect of back channeling technique in improving students' listening skill at the ninth grade of MTs Al-Mukhtary NW Bungtiang.

In this case, the researcher will conduct the research by dividing the object, students, into two group. The first group is experimental group and another one is control group. Experimental group is the group which affect the independent variable on the dependent one is experimented. Moreover the control group of a research is a group which affect the controlling variables as well as other confounding variables are held minimal, Yusra (2009). Afterwards, the researcher will apply three steps to gain the data, there are pre-test, treatment and post-test.

The population in this research is all the ninth class with 62 students and divided into two classes, they are IX.A which consist of 31 students and IX.B with 31 students. The researcher took all the population as the sample. The sampling technique used in this research is random sampling technique. It means that the researcher choose them randomly without considerations. Because the class in this grade is only two classes, the researcher determines the groups by using coin. Based on the result of throwing coin, the researcher found that the experimental group taken from IX.A and the control group taken from IX.B. There are 31 students as the experimental group and 31 students as control group. The instruments used in this research are tape-recorder and test.

### **Method of Data Collection**

In collecting data, the researcher using several steps as follows:

1. Pre-test

The first step is pre-test, this test will be given to students at the beginning of research in order to know the basis knowledge of subject that will be explored. The test will be given to students to gain students' score before applying treatment, in this case doing teaching learning process by using back channeling technique.

2. Treatment

Treatment is a process of applying the technique that will be experimented. This is a manner of treating someone or something in a certain way. In this case, the meaning of treatment is a process of treating students by using back-channeling technique. The treatment in this research will be applied three times to the students both in experimental and control group. The researcher teaches the experimental group by using back channeling technique to measure the effectiveness of this technique in increasing students listening skill. Meanwhile in control group, the researcher treats them by using dictation technique.

3. Post-test

Post test is the last test that will be given to students after they got some treatment by using back channeling technique in order to know the result of the students in their listening skill of English subject. In this test, the form of questions items must be same with the first test, pre-test.

Then, the researcher calculates the data by using this formula:

1. calculating the students' score by using formula:

$$\text{score} = \frac{\text{total score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

total score : students score based on the right answer  
maximum score : the highest score of whole items

2. inserting the score into table data

3. Finding the mean deviation score of each test by using formula:

For experimental group :  $\bar{X} = \frac{\sum D}{N_x}$

**X** : Mean deviation score for the experimental group

**D** : Deviation score of pre test and post test

**N<sub>x</sub>** : Number of samples

**∑** : The Sum of .....

For control group:  $\bar{Y} = \frac{\sum D}{N_y}$

**Y** : Mean deviation score for the control group

**D** : Deviation score of pre test and post test

**N<sub>y</sub>** : Number of samples

**∑** : The Sum of ..... (Yusra , 2006)

4. Computing the square deviation score by using formula:

$$\Sigma = \Sigma ( ) - \frac{(\Sigma )^2}{N} \quad (\text{for experimental group}) \text{ and}$$

$$\Sigma = \Sigma ( ) - \frac{(\Sigma )^2}{N} \quad (\text{for control group})$$

## 5. Finding the t-test

$$T\text{-tes} = \frac{\frac{\sum X}{N_x} - \frac{\sum Y}{N_y}}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2x}{N_x} + \frac{\sum D^2y}{N_y}}}$$

- X : Mean deviation score of experimental group  
Y : Mean deviation score of control group  
D<sup>2</sup>x : The square deviation score of the experimental group  
D<sup>2</sup>y : The square deviation score of the control group  
N<sub>x</sub> : Number of sampling of experimental group  
N<sub>y</sub> : Number of sample of control group  
Σ : Sum of.....

By that computation, the coefficient of t-obs is consulted to t-table by making use of N-1 as the degree of freedom (df). Afterward, it should be considered in the statement below:

- If t-test > t-table in significant rank of 0.05, it indicates that 'Ha' is failed to be rejected. It means that the effect of the treatment is significant, in other word the use of back channeling technique can increase students' listening.

## C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this section the researcher will explain the statistical analysis of data acquired from pre-test and post-test of each class to identify the increasing of students' listening skill by looking at the score they obtained after they were taught by using back-channeling technique. The researcher procure data of pre-test by giving the students of experimental group and control group a test at the first meeting of research. This test intends to know the students' background of listening skill. In this phase, researcher gives a test consist of ten questions and should be answered based on the recording they heard.

After the researcher gave the test, the researcher did the treatment for the experimental group. The students were taught by using back-channeling technique, where the duration for each meeting was 80minutes for 3 times treatment. In this case, students will listening to a short discourse and they should give their response about it to make their comprehension is clearer. On the other hand, the students in control group were taught by using the teachers' own technique, in this case dictation technique.

The last test was post-test. This test intended to know the result of treatments to identify the effect of back-channeling technique in increasing students' listening skill. The model of test was the same as the pre-test but different in content.

Based on research, the researcher was succeeded in getting the data and found that the mean score of experimental group is 68.55 in pre-test and 79.35 in post-test. It indicates that the students' score increase 10.8 after they were taught by using back-channeling technique. In other side, the mean score of control group is 71.61 in pre-test and 76.61 in post-test. It indicates that students' score in control group increase 5. Moreover, the sum of deviation score of experimental group is 355 and for the sum of square deviation is 5725. In

other side, the sum deviation score of control group is 155 and for the sum of square deviation is 2525. It shows that the deviation score in experimental group is higher than that in control group.

After the deviation score and the square of deviation score for both experimental and control group was obtained, it continued to find the mean deviation score for each group. Moreover, it needed to calculate the value of t-test to show the effectiveness of this technique in increasing students' listening skill. To do this calculation, it used t-table by, firstly, defining the degree of freedom (*df*) by using formula:

$$\begin{aligned} Df &= (N_x + N_y) - 2 \\ &= (31 + 31) - 2 \\ &= 60 \end{aligned}$$

It means that the value of t-Table for confidence level of 0.05 (95%) is 2.000 and the value of t-table for confidence level of 0.01 (99%) is 2.660.

Based on the calculation, it found that the t-Test was 5.67 and if it compared to t-Table the value of t-Test was higher than that in value of t-Table in the confidence level of 0.05 (95%) and 0.01 (99%) which was 2.000 and 2.660.

Regarding to analysis above, it was clear that back-channeling technique had given benefits to increase students' listening skill. This technique can make listener more active rather passive listener which only listening without clear purposes. By using this technique, the students paid more attention in process of teaching learning than those students whom were taught by using other technique like dictation technique. However, there were some problems while doing this research:

1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the most difficult aspect to be mastered in English learners. That is because in English language, written form and the way it should be read is really different and arbitrary. The significant differences between Indonesian and English makes students felt hard to master it. It showed when the students listening to the recording, they felt hard to get the sound word mean, whereas the teacher had given the list of vocabulary used in the recording before doing the process of listening. Based on the fact above, it was cleared that the differences between our language and English has become the biggest factors in doing mistakes or wrong perceptions in listening.

2. Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important role in learning English especially in listening process. Lack of vocabulary makes students cannot catch the real meaning of what they heard. When they do not know the meaning of some vocabulary in the recording played, they will find it difficult to interpret the meaning. The result is students will lose their listening concentrations to the whole recording. Besides, when they give response to what they heard, they tend to use inappropriate word to utter their questions or expressions. In this case, students who knew the right form of

it would correct it and tell their friends but if no one knew, so the teacher would correct it.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

After the researcher used back-channeling technique in teaching listening, there was a significant increase in the students' listening skill. It is shown by the mean deviation score of experimental group which was higher than control group. Finally, from the statistical analysis gained from students' score in experimental group and control group, and the comparison between the t-test and t-table where the t-test was higher than t-table at the confidence level of 95% and 99%, it indicates that back-channeling technique is effective in increasing students' listening skill.

Therefore the researcher wants to offer some suggestions as follows:

1. To the teacher. The result of this research shows that this technique is effective in increasing students' listening skill. The researcher suggest to English teacher to use back-channeling technique in teaching listening skill.
2. To the students. Since the listening skill is the basic skill that we have known in learning English and the most difficult subject to be mastered, the students should be able to find out the best solution to cope with this difficulties. In dealing with the problems, back channeling technique is a technique that the students should use to increase their listening skill by drilling with their friends.
3. To the next researcher. The next researcher should develop this research to find out further influence of this technique, not only for listening skill but also for increasing other skills like reading, writing or speaking skill.

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