

**EFL LEARNERS PHONEMIC AWARENESS: CORRELATION BETWEEN
PHONEME IDENTIFICATION AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF
STUDENTS IN UNP**

THESIS

**Submitted as a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements to Obtain Bachelor of
Education (B. Ed) in English Language Education**



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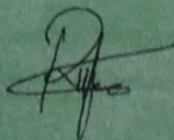
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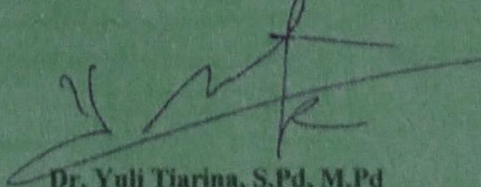


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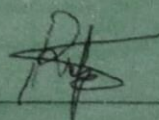
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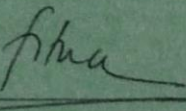
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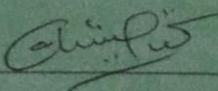
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ABSTRACT

Node, E. A. (2025). EFL Learners Phonemic Awareness: Correlation Between Phoneme Identification and Listening Comprehension of Students in UNP. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Phonemic awareness refers to a learner's ability to understand the individual sounds (phonemes) within spoken language—a foundational skill in communication. Given the significant phonological differences between the English and Indonesian sound systems, Indonesian EFL learners often mispronounce English words by substituting or misusing phonemes. While the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading comprehension has been widely studied, its connection to listening comprehension remains underexplored. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the data were collected from 83 English education students who had completed courses in both Phonetics and Phonology and Advanced Listening. Phonemic awareness was measured using a researcher-adapted online test administered via Google Forms, while listening comprehension was assessed using final exam scores from the Advanced Listening course. Statistical analysis using SPSS revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.785$, $r^2 = 0.616$), suggesting that higher phonemic awareness is strongly associated with better listening comprehension. The study is limited by its sample size, the educational level of the participants, and its focus solely on listening skills. Nevertheless, the findings contribute to the growing body of research on the role of phonemic awareness in second language listening comprehension.

Keywords: *Phonemic awareness, Listening comprehension, EFL Learners*

ABSTRAK

Node, E. A. (2025). Kesadaran Fonemik Pelajar EFL: Korelasi antara Identifikasi Fonem dan Pemahaman Mendengarkan Mahasiswa di UNP. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Kesadaran fonemik merujuk pada kemampuan seseorang untuk memahami bunyi-bunyi individu (fonem) dalam bahasa lisan yang merupakan sebuah keterampilan dasar dalam komunikasi. Mengingat adanya perbedaan fonologis yang signifikan antara sistem bunyi bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia, pembelajar EFL asal Indonesia sering kali salah mengucapkan kata-kata dalam bahasa Inggris dengan mengganti atau menggunakan fonem secara tidak tepat. Meskipun hubungan antara kesadaran fonemik dan pemahaman membaca telah banyak diteliti, keterkaitannya dengan pemahaman mendengarkan masih belum banyak dieksplorasi. Dengan menggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional, data dikumpulkan dari 83 mahasiswa pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang telah menyelesaikan mata kuliah Fonetik dan Fonologi serta Listening Lanjut. Kesadaran fonemik diukur menggunakan tes daring yang disesuaikan oleh peneliti dan diberikan melalui Google Forms, sementara pemahaman mendengarkan dinilai menggunakan nilai ujian akhir dari mata kuliah Listening Lanjut. Analisis statistik menggunakan SPSS menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat antara kedua variabel ($r = 0,785$, $r^2 = 0,616$), yang menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran fonemik yang lebih tinggi sangat berkaitan dengan pemahaman mendengarkan yang lebih baik. Studi ini memiliki keterbatasan pada ukuran sampel, tingkat pendidikan peserta, dan fokusnya yang hanya pada keterampilan mendengarkan. Meskipun demikian, temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan penelitian mengenai peran kesadaran fonemik dalam pemahaman mendengarkan.

Kata Kunci: Kesadaran Fonemik, Pemahaman Mendengarkan, Pelajar EFL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Phonemic awareness is the ground of communication. Phonemic awareness deals with a person's understanding of individual sounds, known as phonemes (Heggerty & VanHekken, 2020; Listyarini et al., 2022). Phoneme is the smallest unit in a language.

Phonemic awareness falls into the linguistic subject of phonetics and phonology. Where phonemic awareness alongside phonetic awareness, are the components that make up phonological awareness. (Listyarini et al., 2022; Rokhman et al., 2020). In contrast to phonemic awareness, phonetic awareness focuses on a person's manner of articulation (Heggerty & VanHekken, 2020; Listyarini et al., 2022). Together, these two components enables a person to recognize, process, and work with the phonological units that make up spoken words, known as phonological awareness (Milankov et al., 2021)

Phonemic awareness affects how human process spoken words. Since a spoken word is consisted of several phonemes. This can be proven with the conducted research from Rokhman et al. (2020), who found that Phonemic awareness have a positive correlation towards word processing. Since phonemes (sound) represents a grapheme (letters) in a language.

Phonemic awareness is linked to reading comprehension. Students become better at reading once they have the skill to recognize whole words and process words more efficiently. This theory is proven to be true by the research

from Alhumsi (2020) that found there is a positive correlation between phonemic awareness and emergent readers' word recognition ability. So, better phonemic awareness leads to greater reading comprehension. Also, Listyarini et al. (2022) agreed that there is a connection between phonemic awareness and reading comprehension ability.

Not only in reading, phonemic awareness is important in listening as well. Since phonemes are the smallest units of sound in spoken language, and listening involves recognizing and processing these sounds, phonemic awareness is naturally linked to listening comprehension. In the listening process, listener needs to breakdown or isolate the sound uttered by the speaker into the smallest unit of sound, so the message can be understood (Rokhman et al., 2020). During listening, the listener must segment the continuous stream of speech into individual phonemes to accurately interpret the intended message. According to Putri (2018), phonemic awareness and listening performance are correlated to one another. This means Phonemic Awareness may influence Listening

In the past, phonemic awareness is usually linked to reading comprehension. There are only few studies that investigates phonemic awareness to other language skills. Nowadays, researchers are trying to link phonemic awareness to listening language skills (Cheung, 2007; Cheung et al., 2001).

Indonesian EFL students could be having problems with English phonemes. Since English and Indonesian phonemic system is different from

each other (Rokhman et al., 2020). The phonemic inventory of English contains several sounds that do not exist in Indonesian. For instance, English includes the voiced and voiceless dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/, as in *this* and *think*, which are absent in Indonesian and often substituted with /d/ or /t/. Therefore, it is challenging for Indonesian EFL learners to have a good English phonemic awareness.

Phonemes is also one of the few challenges that students faced when listening. It directly impacts a learner's ability to decode spoken language effectively, especially when the input is phonetically complex. Past research shows that phonological features are the main factor of students' listening difficulties, alongside speech rate and prior knowledge (Blau, 2010; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Craig, 2004; Griffiths, 1992; Nadhira & Warni, 2021; Zhao, 1997).

To add further context to this study, the researcher has been actively observing Indonesian EFL learners across different educational levels, ranging from high school students to university undergraduates. Through these observations, a recurring issue has emerged concerning phoneme accuracy in spoken English. Firstly, it is observed that many Indonesian EFL learners tend to mispronounce certain English phonemes, often substituting them with sounds more familiar within the Indonesian phonological system. For instance, it has been consistently noted that some university-level students mispronounce the word "focus" as "fōkyooz," whereas the correct pronunciation is /'fou.kəs/. This mispronunciation indicates a lack of awareness regarding English phonemes. This is proven by the study from Buana and Irawan (2021) that found

Indonesian learner have problem pronouncing certain phonemes that is not in the phonemic inventory of their mother tongue.

Hearing someone speaks in English is a direct way to estimate their English proficiency. It is observed that EFL learners who have low phonemic awareness also have low English proficiency in general. This statement is supported by Sun and Lee (2021) who found that phonemic awareness interaction between language skills are affected by English proficiency levels.

The subject observed have completed the course of phonetic and phonology as well as advance listening. However, the EFL learners still shows some misuse of phoneme in speech. Regarding this issue, Rokhman et al. (2020) suggested that Indonesian EFL learners' exposure to oral English needs to be given more. By listening more to native speaker outside of classroom environment, Indonesian student's phonemic awareness can be developed.

There are a few researches that has been done that drives the researcher to conduct this study. The first research was conducted by Sun and Lee (2021), they have found that phonological awareness has significant correlation with listening and reading comprehension to students with low-level English proficiency. However, it does not with students with high-level of English proficiency. Then, another research was done by Putri et al. (2018), it is found that there was a significant correlation between phonemic awareness and listening performance with the p-value (0.000) was higher than (0.05). The third study was done by Li et al. (2012), the result showed that there is a positive correlation between English listening comprehension and English phonological

awareness. The fourth study is by Rokhman et al., (2020), they have found that being able to identify phoneme will help processing English words. The fifth study was conducted by Listyarini et al., (2022) , they have found that better phonemic awareness leads to better reading comprehension.

The previous studies highlight the urgency of phonemic awareness is for Indonesian EFL students. Rokhman et al. (2020), found that Phonemic awareness has a positive correlation towards word processing. Alhums (2020) found that there is a positive correlation between phonemic awareness and emergent readers' word recognition ability. Listyarini et al. (2022) agreed that there is a connection between phonemic awareness and reading comprehension ability. Putri (2018), suggested that phonemic awareness and listening performance are correlated to one another.

While previous studies have explored the correlation between phonemic awareness and reading comprehension, they have primarily focused on younger learners or non-Indonesian EFL contexts. Little attention has been given to university-level Indonesian EFL learners and the specific role of phoneme identification skills in listening comprehension. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension among students at Padang State University. Hence, research under the title **“EFL LEARNERS PHONEMIC AWARENESS: CORRELATION BETWEEN PHONEME IDENTIFICATION SKILL AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF STUDENTS IN PADANG STATE UNIVERSITY”** was conducted.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background described above, the researcher identifies several problems faced by EFL learners. Firstly, many EFL learners often use incorrect phonemes, which often leads to mispronunciation and spelling errors. Secondly, they tend to have low exposure to native English phonemes, particularly in the form of spoken words. Lastly, their listening comprehension is challenged by various phonological features of the English language, making it difficult to accurately process spoken input.

C. Limitation of the Problem

This study is limited to examining only the correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension. It does not explore causation or the potential influence of other language skills. Furthermore, it focuses specifically on college students in English education major. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The primary limitation of this research is that it only focuses on its own variables which is the correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension among English education major students.

E. Research Question

1. Is there any significant correlation between students' phonemic awareness and their listening comprehension?

F. Purpose of the Research

Based on the formulation of the research question, the objective of this study is to examine the correlation between students' phonemic awareness and their listening comprehension, as well as to determine the strength of that correlation

G. Significance of the Research

1. For Researchers

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of the correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension. By exploring this correlation, the research adds to the linguistic and educational literature by providing empirical evidence that may support or refine existing theories on phonemic awareness and listening comprehension. Additionally, this study addresses a gap in the current research by focusing specifically on listening comprehension, a topic that has been less studied in this context.

2. For Educators

Practically, the findings of this study have the potential to inform educators about the existence of this research highlighting the correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension.

3. For Students

As an EFL learner, this study able to remind the students on the importance of phonemic awareness in developing their listening comprehension. By recognizing the role of phonemic awareness in

understanding spoken English, students are encouraged to actively engage in activities that improve their listening skills.

H. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding of the terms used in this research, the following definitions are given:

1. Phonemic awareness

Phonemic Awareness (PA) is the knowledge of the individual sound that composed spoken language

2. Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension (LC) is constructing meaning from speech

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between students' phonemic awareness and their listening comprehension. The results showed a strong, positive correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension. This is evidenced by the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.785 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating a strong relationship between the two variables.

The results of the linearity test confirm that the relationship between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension follows a linear pattern. This conclusion is supported by a highly significant p -value for linearity ($p < 0.001$), indicating a strong linear association between the two variables. Furthermore, the test for deviation from linearity yielded a non-significant result ($p = 0.647$), indicating that there is no substantial deviation from linearity. Together, these findings validate the assumption of linearity of the relationship between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension.

The coefficient of determination (r^2) was found to be 0.616, indicating that 61.6% of the variance in listening comprehension scores can be explained by students' phonemic awareness. This proportion suggests a strong predictive relationship between the two variables. The result emphasizes that students with higher levels of phonemic awareness are more likely to achieve better scores in listening comprehension tasks.

Based on the explanation above, the conclusion can be drawn. There is a significant relationship between Phonemic Awareness and Listening Comprehension. The findings showed that students with higher levels of Phonemic Awareness are likely to have stronger Listening Comprehension. The relationship between the two variables showed linearity. Hence, as students' Phonemic Awareness increases, their Listening Comprehension also tends to improve. The coefficient of determination showed that a big portion of the variance in Listening Comprehension scores can be explained by Phonemic Awareness. The students who performed well in listening comprehension are likely to possess strong Phonemic Awareness.

B. Suggestion

However, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to a specific academic setting, which may affect the generalizability of the results. The study only focused on phonemic awareness as a predictor of listening comprehension without considering other potential linguistic or cognitive factors. Finally, the sampling technique of this research uses the quota sampling technique, which is less suitable for quantitative research.

It is suggested that students seek more exposure to English outside of the classroom environment. Regularly engaging with English-language media such as music, movies, podcasts, and other spoken content can help students develop stronger phonemic awareness through increased familiarity with native pronunciation and phonological patterns.

For teachers, it is recommended to integrate more authentic English materials and listening activities into the classroom. Relying solely on textbooks and traditional methods may not be sufficient to help students acquire the nuances of English phonemes. Using native audio sources, interactive listening tasks, and real-life communication scenarios can create a more immersive learning environment that enhances both phonemic awareness and listening skills.

For researchers, this study may be expanded by involving a larger sample size to improve the generalizability of the findings, and use a better sampling technique. Additionally, future studies may consider involving participants from higher proficiency levels to explore whether the correlation between phonemic awareness and listening comprehension holds consistent across different age groups and proficiency levels. This could provide deeper insight into the scope of phonemic awareness and its influence on listening skills in more advanced EFL learners.

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