



An Analysis of Formal and Informal Language in Classroom Listening Comprehension of TBI 2 Students at UIN Sumatera Utara

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Abstract: This study analyzes the use of formal and informal language in classroom listening comprehension among second-semester students of the Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI) program at UIN Sumatera Utara. Listening comprehension is a crucial skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, and students' understanding of spoken input may vary depending on language registers used during classroom interaction. This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design involving 25 TBI 2 students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a close-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that most students are able to distinguish between formal and informal language used by lecturers during listening activities. Students generally perceive informal language as easier to understand, while formal language remains comprehensible and appropriate in academic contexts. Classroom interaction, intonation, and shifts in language style also support students in identifying levels of language formality. These findings suggest that a balanced use of formal and informal language may support effective listening comprehension in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Formal Language, Informal Language, Listening Comprehension and TBI-2 Students

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in language learning and plays a central role in everyday communication. Among the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing listening is the most frequently used in real-life situations. Adams (1938) emphasized that listening dominates daily communication activities such as interviews, conversations, and public meetings. Despite its importance, listening has historically received less instructional attention in formal education compared to other language skills. This imbalance indicates that listening, although essential, is often underdeveloped through systematic and focused pedagogical practices.

In contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, listening instruction is commonly delivered through carefully structured and predominantly formal language input. Formal language is often considered clearer, more controlled, and academically appropriate for instructional purposes. However, this type of input does not always represent the linguistic reality learners encounter outside the classroom. In contrast, informal or conversational English, which includes natural speech patterns, reduced forms, and context-dependent expressions, is more commonly used in daily communication. Ju (2000) demonstrates that exposure to informal English can be more effective in strengthening learners' listening comprehension than exclusive reliance on

formal language input. This suggests that the variety of language used in listening instruction plays a significant role in shaping learners' comprehension abilities.

For EFL learners, particularly at the tertiary level, understanding both formal and informal language registers is crucial. In classroom interactions, lecturers frequently use formal language when explaining academic content, while informal language often emerges during spontaneous interaction, clarification, or discussion. This unavoidable variation requires learners to be sensitive to language registers in order to interpret spoken messages accurately. However, previous studies indicate that EFL students often experience difficulties in distinguishing and comprehending formal and informal language, especially in listening activities. These difficulties may lead to misunderstanding of meaning, speaker intention, and communicative context, thereby negatively affecting overall listening comprehension.

Although research on listening comprehension and language variation has grown, studies that specifically examine the use of formal and informal language in classroom listening contexts within Indonesian higher education remain limited. In English teacher education programs such as Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI), this issue is particularly important because students are not only expected to develop their own listening competence but also to become future educators who model effective listening instruction. However, limited attention has been given to how TBI students comprehend and respond to different language varieties used in classroom listening activities.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the use of formal and informal language in classroom listening comprehension among TBI 2 students at UIN Sumatera Utara. By focusing on this specific context, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language variation influences listening comprehension in EFL classrooms and to provide pedagogical insights for designing more balanced, realistic, and effective listening instruction.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at describing students' listening comprehension related to the use of formal and informal language in classroom instruction. The research was conducted at UIN Sumatera Utara and involved 25 second-semester students from the Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI) program, who were selected using total sampling since all students in the class participated. Data were collected through a close-ended questionnaire that focused on students' ability to recognize formal and informal language, their attention to lecturers' language choices, and their level of comprehension during listening activities, with responses measured using simple categorical options. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative techniques by calculating frequencies and percentages, which were then presented in tables and charts. To ensure data validity, the questionnaire items were carefully designed based on the research objectives, clearly worded to avoid ambiguity, and reviewed for consistency in response patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

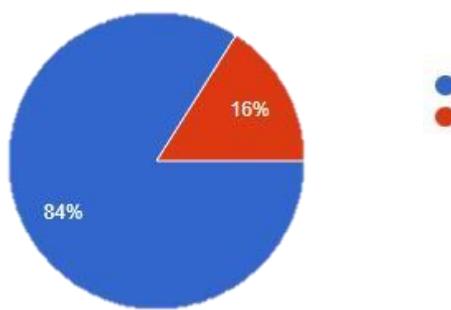
The This study involved 25 students from the TBI 2 department at UIN North Sumatra. Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of 10 items related to the use of formal and informal language in listening comprehension within the classroom setting. The summary of the research data is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Perception of Formal and Informal Language Use

No	Questionnaire Statement	Always (%)	Rarely (%)
1	Able to distinguish the lecturer's use of formal and informal language.	88%	12%
2	Pay attention to the choice of words (diction) used by the lecturer.	52%	48%
3	Easier to understand the material if the lecturer uses informal language.	84%	16%
4	Able to understand explanations even if the lecturer uses formal language.	56%	14%
5	Recognize changes in the lecturer's language style (formal to informal or vice versa).	68%	32%
6	Feel that formal vocabulary makes it harder to understand explanations.	28%	72%
7	Catch the lecturer's meaning faster when they use informal language.	80%	20%
8	Classroom interaction helps in understanding the difference between formal and informal language.	84%	16%
9	Able to determine the level of language formality through the lecturer's intonation.	72%	28%
10	Attempt to identify whether classroom conversations are formal or informal.	72%	28%

Based on Table 1, it is evident that students possess a high level of linguistic sensitivity. The role of classroom interaction in helping students bridge the gap between different language registers is further illustrated in the following chart:

Figure 1. Students' perception on how classroom interaction helps distinguish between formal and informal language.



The findings of this study indicate that TBI 2 students demonstrate significant linguistic awareness. As shown in Table 1, 88% of respondents are consistently able to distinguish the lecturer's speech registers. Furthermore, the data from item 8 (Figure 1) highlights that active classroom interaction (84%) serves as a vital tool for students to map the boundaries between formal and informal language. This suggests that listening comprehension is not merely a passive process of absorbing content but an active social-linguistic analysis.

In terms of comprehension efficiency, informal language acts as a cognitive stimulant. Around 80% of students reported catching the lecturer's meaning faster when an informal style was employed. This likely occurs because informal language reduces the "affective filter" or psychological tension, allowing 72% of students to maintain better concentration. Interestingly, while they prefer informal approaches for ease of understanding, the majority (72%) do not face severe difficulties with formal academic vocabulary (Item 6). This indicates that the preference for informal language is driven by a need for cognitive efficiency rather than a lack of formal linguistic competence.

Overall, students at UIN North Sumatra exhibit an adaptive communication style. They respect formal language as a hallmark of academic professionalism (72%), yet they functionally rely on informal and interactive approaches to accelerate their listening comprehension. The synergy between a lecturer's intonation, shifting language styles, and student interaction creates a more effective and responsive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that TBI 2 students at UIN Sumatera Utara have a high level of awareness about the usage of formal and informal language in classroom listening circumstances. Most students can identify distinctions in language registers employed by lecturers and alter their listening comprehension accordingly. According to the findings, students see informal language as simpler to comprehend during listening exercises, although formal language stays accessible and appropriate in academic discourse. Furthermore, classroom engagement, lecturer intonation, and language style alterations tend to help students detect and comprehend different levels of formality. These findings imply that listening comprehension is a dynamic process that requires language sensitivity and contextual awareness. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study

emphasizes the significance of balancing formal and informal language use in listening training, especially in English teacher preparation programs. Such an approach has the potential to assist construct more effective, realistic, and interesting learning environments. Future studies should involve bigger samples and use qualitative or experimental methodologies to investigate language variance in listening comprehension in higher education EFL situations.

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