

Students' perception and expectation toward learning German receptive skills

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions and expectations of German language students, especially in terms of receptive skills. This study asks two main questions: i) what are the expectations of students towards learning German and ii) how are students' perceptions of German learning, especially reading and listening, the data sources for this research are students of the German Language Education Study Program. The research instruments were questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed descriptively, which showed that i) In general (98%) students have high expectations to study and work in Germany, for example, following the "Ausbildung," ii) 98% of students realize that reading and listening are ways to broaden horizons, enrich vocabulary, and avoid misunderstandings in both one-way and two-way communication; and iii) Students' cognitive perceptions of reading and listening skills contribute to their positive attitudes towards improving these receptive skills; this finding shows that positive perceptions and high expectations of students are inversely proportional to their receptive abilities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Achieving optimal learning outcomes is the main target of the teaching and learning process. Specifically for the German Language Education Study Program at Pattimura University, the language proficiency level targeted for students is level B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language criteria called in German *Gemeinsamen Europäischen Referenzrahmen für Sprache* (GER). GER defines three categories of language skills, namely the first is the A1/A2 level, which is called the use of language at the basic level, the second is the B1/B2 level, namely the use of language independently, and the third level is C1/C2 which is categorized as the usage of language competently, whose ability is equivalent to native language users [1]. One of the important elements in using language independently is understanding texts, both spoken and written texts. To reach the language proficiency level B1 as described above, the management of curriculum implementation must be arranged in such a way that the teaching and learning process can integrate all elements of learning, both lecturers and students, materials, and media. This will be possible to achieve because all lecturers of the study program have master's and doctoral education qualifications. They have advanced language certificates with international recognition, both at the B1, B2 and even C1 levels. Besides, all have national and international experience.

On the other hand, a curriculum review has been carried out by allocating sufficient time to develop language competencies. Even so, the students still have difficulty in reaching the targeted language level. The

results of the research showed that overall the average language proficiency of the 5th-7th-semester students of the German Language Education Study Program have not yet reached the B1-GER level, i) reading (0%), ii) listening (16%), iii) writing (13%), and iv) speaking (34%) [2]. Visualization of the research results shows that students' weaknesses, respectively, lie in the ability to read, write, listen, and speak. The results of this study raise questions about the effectiveness of lectures being undertaken, both by students and by lecturers who are guided by a curriculum that has been reviewed, associated with idealism, expectations, and student perspectives on the benefits of learning German.

Further, students studying in the German Language Education Study Program are high school graduates (*SMA*) from various regions in Indonesia, with different backgrounds. The students were divided into two large groups, students who had studied German in high school and groups of students who had never studied German in high school. Some students made German their choice in the German Language Education Study Program, but some students didn't choose the study program. Moreover, there are students from cities who have access to information about Germany and the benefits of learning a language, but there are also students who come from schools or regions that do not have access to information about Germany or the benefits of learning German. The variety of choices and insights about the language they understand is thought to influence students' point of view or perception and expectations of the objects they learn, in this case, German.

Perception is a person's tendency to something in the relative realm, meaning that individual perceptions of something will vary based on their perceptions [3], [4]. Thus, the perception will also affect differences in learning outcomes for each individual. Furthermore, perception can also be considered as the process of one's assessment of certain objects. Perception consists of 2 aspects, namely: i) cognition aspects related to memory, language, associations, concepts, attention, awareness, problem-solving, and interpretation of stimuli from objects to form thinking processes and ii) affection aspects related to personal feelings and emotions [5]. The understanding obtained from the cognitive process will make someone understand what the individual feels regarding feelings of pleasure displeasure or sadness. Cognitive structures develop from perception and action, then connect perception with emotions that emotions are perceptions, and moral concepts are based on perceptions [6], [7].

The perception in this study refers to the way students combine their knowledge or cognitive structures about learning and the benefits of German to interpret their hopes or expectations for learning German. Thus, there are two important pieces of information in this study: i) how students interpret German learning, especially receptive skills learning (reading and listening) from the perspective of knowledge and understanding of everything related to Germany and the benefits of learning German and ii) what are students' expectations based on perceptions of Germany and learning German. Furthermore, the basic thinking in the field of linguistics is that listening and reading skills, which are "receptive skills," a skill related to receiving contact or communication, while speaking and writing skills are often described by experts as "*productive skills*," which means producing communication [8], [9]. Receptive language skills include listening and reading skills, which have been developed before the productive abilities of speaking and writing. Receptive abilities are dominated by listening skills, including processing, understanding, interpreting, and evaluating what is heard or spoken about in various situations [10], [11]. The basic question raised is the portion of the teacher's attention, for instance, for the four language skills. The importance of paying more systematic attention to the development of listening skills, compared to reading and writing, or even speaking, which is often considered trivial or neglected in language teaching and teaching materials [12], [13]. The main reason is, that if students listen a lot, they will learn by "osmosis" [14], [15]. This research's focus is on receptive ability; thus, the basic theory used is reading skills and listening skills. Reading skills are described as cognitive abilities that a person can use when interacting with the text [16], [17]. The benefits of reading are cognitive development, namely planning how to understand a text, knowing content, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating the progress towards understanding. While the cognitive strategies, which mean skimming, scanning for comprehension, and reading the core [18], [19]. Further, reading is a receptive activity in that a reader, or in this case, a student visually receives a written text and cognitively processes to understand the reading or text (*Verstehen*) and shows the result of the reading process (*Verständnis*).

Based on the German Study Program graduates' profile, students are expected to have language competency level B1; thus, the student's ability of each language skill needs to be tested. The reading test at B1 level according to the GER standard, students must be able to understand the text, especially about the language used in everyday life and the professional field. Thus, the ability to comprehend text includes understanding text types, global reading, reading details, selective reading, or reading in other styles. Listening skills or "*Hörverständnis*" are very important in learning a foreign language. Clausnitzer also emphasized that speaking is a process of listening and understanding, "*Ohne Hören und Verstehen kein Sprechen-Diese Erkenntnis sollte das Unterrichtsgeschehen stets berücksichtigen*" [20], [21]. That means

listening skills (HV) are the most important language skills and play a significant role, without neglecting other skills. *Hörverstehen*, on the one hand, is a language activity, that is closely related to speaking (skills), and it is a part of the process of foreign language interaction. Further, to achieve good listening results, it is necessary to pay attention to the methodical principles before starting the process of listening to texts, especially new texts. In listening to the new texts, the lecturer must be able to apply the right strategy to activate the initial knowledge of the theme or substance of the text that a student wants to listen to or read, for example through a sociogram, and connect it to the situations to listen.

According to the study program curriculum, listening skills are described in the HV (*Hörverständnis*) course, which for the renewal of the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (KKNI) curriculum is integrated with other skills. HV consists of two words "*hören*" and "*verstehen*," which means "to hear" and "to understand". Students are required not only to hear but also to be able to understand what is heard. Listening is an activity that is a process, then hearing and understanding according to the meaning of the word HV is included in the listening process [22], [23]. Listening (HV) is a communication process, which consists of the process; of listening to or receiving information, understanding and interpreting the utterances conveyed, and through this process interaction or communication occurs [24]. Based on that, listening (HV) in the teaching of foreign languages is considered one of the language acquisitions processes. Nowadays, listening activities are facilitated through spontaneous listening documents, or not through media such as videos [25]. Thus, media such as music or songs can be used to facilitate teaching German activities in the classroom.

Meanwhile, to achieve students' maximum ability in learning listening skills (HV) as one of the language skills taught in the study program, it is necessary to carry out strategies, learning methods, and learning media that support achievement. This study only focuses on the use of music media. In connection with this research that focuses on listening skills, it should be emphasized that when individuals have good receptive language skills, they understand what words mean and can follow directions [26], [27]. Meanwhile, learning outcomes in listening skills will be assessed whether students can understand texts in various situations. The instructions or explanations referred to in the previous explanation are made in the form of a written test to assess the language learning outcomes for listening skills.

Expectations as expectations of pleasure that are not constant, which arise from the idea of something in the future [28]. The term expectation refers to a strong belief, desire, and hope that will happen in the future. Expectations are related to perception, and if the perception is positive, it can also impact positive expectations. That means that students' expectations of learning German in this research are all hopes or dreams that can be achieved by students and lecturers concerning learning German. Suppose there are differences in students' perceptions and expectations of learning German, especially learning receptive skills such as reading and listening; in that case, it can be assumed that learning planning does not support the achievement of language skills according to student expectations.

2. METHOD

The approach of this research is descriptive qualitative research with the consideration that this study examines the problem of student and lecturer perceptions of learning German receptive skills. The samples of this study were 120 active students in the German Language Education Study Program. Further, data collection used questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was used to obtain data on students' general perceptions of German receptive skills as well as their expectations towards learning the language. while Interviews were conducted to explore and confirm the data obtained through a questionnaire in a limited manner. Before use the instrument was validated for both content validation and readability by a team of German language validators with experience in the field of German language learning. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively. Analysis of research data concerning students' perceptions of receptive skills in German and their expectations to learn German was carried out using a percentage description.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' perceptions of the benefits of learning German were represented by the questions about the benefits of learning German, both for the benefit of further study and the opportunity to take part in job training (The *Ausbildung* program) in Germany. An overview of student perceptions and expectations is presented in Table 1. A question regarding further study, all students (54 students/100%) agree that studying German provides an opportunity for them to study in Germany. In comparison, 98% admit that learning German offers them an opportunity to take a job training (*Ausbildung*) program in Germany. These results indicate that students of the German Language Education Study Program have positive expectations of their decision to learn German.

Students' perspective on the benefits of reading shows two statements, namely those related to the learning process and its use in the world of work. 98.1% of students admitted that reading and its relation to expanding horizons and developing vocabulary both agree and strongly agree. In this case, students view reading as a language activity that can add vocabulary and expand horizons. The addition of vocabulary and broadening of insights are closely related to self-development, especially in career development. On the question of students' views on the benefits of reading from the perspective of self-development, most (98.2%) students saw reading skills as a language activity that was beneficial for them in self-development, especially in using information obtained through reading. In this case, reading is not just pronouncing words, sentences, or text correctly and fluently but reading at the tertiary level emphasizes understanding or obtaining information from a text. This information will be stored as a person's schemata and can be used when needed. This information can be in the form of factual, procedural, conceptual, or even metacognitive knowledge. This view encourages students to pay attention to German texts; thus, it shows that 85.6% of students always take the time to read German sentences or texts they encounter. Besides, paying attention to German texts, 80.8% of students admitted that they tried to improve what was learned in class by increasing post-class practice frequency.

Thus, a positive student perspective on reading must be followed by reading the right way so that efforts to expand horizons and vocabulary for self-development can be achieved. High reading frequency is not always synonymous with effective reading. Therefore, it is necessary to study how students read? The data on how students read shows that 92.6% of students try to understand "word-for-word" even though the purpose of reading is the understanding of text contents globally. Furthermore, how to read by understanding "word-for-word" in the text shapes their view of the benefits of the dictionary. In this case, the dictionary is considered by students as the primary media in reading. This view was expressed by 82.2% of students. Students' positive perceptions of reading skills require support from the environment, especially the learning environment. In this case, the lecturer plays an important role. The lecturer is an essential factor in student self-development. The way of teaching by lecturers in the context of receptive skills is not only focused on what is understood but much more important, is the practice or process of understanding the text. The answer to the question is that 86.3% of students still perceive lecturers as sources of information and can be used as role models. In teaching reading skills, 96.3% of students admitted that the lecturer's explanation before reading could help students understand the text. Another admission shows that 77.8% of students can understand the lecturer's explanation regarding how to understand the text. Besides, 20% thought that the lecturer's explanation about how to understand the text was still difficult to understand. The same point of view is also expressed when a question is asked whether there is difficulty in understanding the text without explaining the meaning of deducing techniques. Further, 83.3% of students admitted that there were difficulties in understanding the text without explaining the strategy for concluding its meaning. Students' perceptions and expectations of reading skills are positive; then this is followed up by developing these skills, both inside and outside the classroom, by utilizing lecturers as one of the information sources and guiding the lecture process.

Table 1. Element of perception and expectation

Statement	Perception and Expectation	f	%
Studying German provides an opportunity for them to study in Germany	Positive	54	100
Learning German offers an opportunity to take a job training (<i>Ausbildung</i>) program in Germany	Positive	53	98
Reading as part of self-improvement in studies and career development	Positive	53	98
Reading emphasizes understanding or obtaining information from a text	Positive	53	98
Taking time to read German texts	Positive	46	85.6
Practicing what they have learned in their daily activities	Positive	44	81.8
Receptive language learning should be outcome or process-oriented	Positive	47	86.3
The role of the pre-reading process by lecturers in reading	Positive	52	96.3
The importance of listening skills in daily activities	Positive	53	98
The role of vocabulary in listening	Positive	54	100
Practice listening outside of lesson time		35	64.9
Literal listening comprehension	Negative	40	92.6
The importance of mastering listening techniques	Positive	54	100
The Importance of audio-visual combinations in listening	Positive	54	100
Emotional readiness while listening	Negative (bored)	18	33

As part of receptive skills, is listening perceived positively as reading? Students' perspectives on the benefits of listening start from a question about the importance of learning to listen. Likewise reading, and listening also support the broadening of horizons and developing vocabulary, even self-development through

oral texts, such as radio broadcasts, TV, talk shows, and other audio media. For this reason, 98.2% of students think that the ability to understand spoken texts is very useful, especially when listening to announcements in open places such as at the airport or on TV broadcasts such as talk shows. On the other hand, students view listening as a linguistic activity that can contribute to adding vocabulary. Vocabulary is considered the most important factor in listening. This was recognized by 100% of students regarding questions about the position of vocabulary in listening. Therefore, students try to develop vocabulary by listening to dialogues. This habit is carried out by 98% of students. This view encourages students to pay attention to German-spoken texts, including taking the time to practice reading outside of class hours. This information was acknowledged by 64.9% of students.

The methodical didactic reading and listening have similarities in the process. Reading uses visual media, while listening uses audio, but both can be combined in the format of using audio-visual media, for example, through a video. This is recognized by 100% of students. Based on the student's point of view, the supporting material such as videos is very useful in listening practice. In understanding the oral text (listening), students try to understand every word in the verbal text that is heard. The way of listening by understanding the word for word was done by 92.6% of students. Student views on the role of lecturers in reading and listening are principally the same, namely that lecturers are placed as one of the sources of information. Therefore, following the lecturers' explanations, activating student schemata before listening is very important, because it can help understand the text that is heard. This view was expressed by 98.1% of students. In addition, to schemata activation, students also deemed necessary explanations of the techniques for inferring meaning in listening.

Further, 79.6% of students admitted that they had difficulty understanding the text that was heard, if they did not apply proper listening techniques. Therefore, lecturers need to practice inference techniques regularly. The need for regular practice of meaning-deducing techniques in listening was stated by 100% of students when asked about the need to practice standard listening techniques.

Self-perception is understood as an individual's perspective on himself. This research data is directed at how students see themselves after actively listening to lecture activities. Related to a question about students' ability to use meaning-inferring strategies in listening, 84.9% of students stated that they could use listening strategies, both when listening to conversations through a video, songs, or direct conversations with native German speakers. On the other hand, students also acknowledged an increase in their listening ability after attending lectures; namely, 78.9% of students acknowledged increased listening ability. Even so, there are still 33% of students admit that they feel bored and even stop listening if there are words in the text that are not understood. Besides, there are still students, although only a few (16.7%) feel depressed if they follow the listening skills lecture.

All the data described above provide various information about students' expectations and perceptions of receptive language skills, in this case, reading and listening. These data need to be discussed to determine the relationship between expectations and perceptions of students' efforts in mastering reading and listening skills. These data need to be discussed to correlate expectations and perceptions of students' efforts in mastering reading and listening skills. In general, students have high expectations for German. 100% of students of the German Language Education Study Program who participated in this study believed that mastery of the German language allowed students to study in Germany, both academic education and vocational education "*Ausbildung* program," which is one of the education systems in Germany. This system is known as the duals-system (a combination of practice in the industry and the classroom and theory), which is education that builds close collaboration between educational institutions, companies or industries, and the government. In the Indonesian context, policies such as the "*Ausbildung* program" have also become government policies, among others, through education in vocational schools, with the hope that the expertise generated through vocational programs is one of the answers in facing the current era of competition. Previous research indicates that the outcomes of Germany and Indonesia's cooperation in vocational education through the *Ausbildung* program are, both directly and indirectly, appropriate and doable attempts to raise the standard of education and quality of Indonesian resources. These efforts will also raise the country's overall economic welfare, increase the number of experts, and enhance the country's reputation by improving the vocational education system [29]. Currently, graduates of vocational high schools in Eastern Indonesia are employed in the tourism industry as tour guides, travel agency staff in Ambon, and employees of the *Ausbildung* program in hotels in Germany [30]. This program's high level of student enthusiasm makes it one of the tools for enhancing human resource capabilities. This policy is an opportunity for German language learning students. In this case, they not only become teachers but through mastery of the German language they have the chance to attend education in Germany, both vocational education and academic education, as has been done by several alumni of the German Language Education Study Program. As described above, student expectations are one of the positive factors that encourage students to study harder. Mastery of language is one of the instruments that students need to master to achieve these expectations.

Even so, these expectations are not strong enough in encouraging students to master German. As explained in this writing background, students' German language skills have not been satisfying, including students' weakness in understanding German text, both spoken and written texts.

The basic principle is that reading and listening are obtaining the information contained in a text. Students can expand their vocabulary through reading and listening activities; and obtain information from both oral and written texts. The information will be stored as schemata in memory. This information can be in the form of factual, procedural, conceptual, or even metacognitive knowledge in the world of work [31]. The explanations above show that the students are cognitively aware that learning to read and listen has comprehensive benefits, not only limited to the need for study completion but are very useful after completing German studies, in the form of self-development and career development. Among others, they can help students realize their hopes for studies, both academic studies and vocational studies in Germany. Reading and listening skills must be supported by effective and efficient mastery of reading and listening. The description of the data above shows that 92.6% of students try to understand text "word-for-word", even though the purpose of reading is an understanding of text contents globally, as well as in listening. The way of listening by understanding the word for word was done by 92.6% of students and had a dependence on dictionaries, both in listening and reading. This brief description shows that high expectations and positive perceptions should be followed by efficient reading and listening techniques. How to read and listen, as described above, illustrates a less efficient way of listening and reading.

Good readers use many strategies to process and recall information read in the phases before, during, or after reading as what is aimed. They can link and integrate their initial knowledge to confirm the information contained in the text. Conversely, poor readers only focus on a word-for-word understanding of the text, so they have difficulty understanding concepts or information in the text. The impact of ineffective reading or understanding only at the level of words can lead to frustration and lead to feelings of boredom or even resistance to these activities [32], [33].

From all the results of the discussion, it appears that students have high expectations of German; students' perceptions of German are also positive, both in terms of benefits and processes. Positive expectations and perceptions of the German language encourage students to study harder. This effort can be seen from the data that students also take advantage of their time outside the classroom to practice and deepen German, especially reading and listening. However, there are still problems that need to be solved in terms of the understanding process, namely reading and listening techniques. The above references have proven that reading or listening while just trying to understand word for word is one of the characteristics of inefficient methods. Based on the data and discussion above, it can be assumed that the application of inappropriate comprehension techniques may cause the low reading and listening skills of students in the field of German.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, students of the German Language Education Study Program have high expectations of their decision to study German. By mastering German, students can pursue education in Germany, both academic and vocational education. Students also have a positive perception of mastering German, especially receptive skills, reading, and listening. Reading and listening skills are perceived as a way to develop insight and develop themselves in a career through information or knowledge gained through reading and listening. Thus, reading and listening skills are not only limited to developing their vocabulary but also to the use of information obtained in the world of work. Positive perceptions and expectations on the one hand encourage or motivate students to strive to master these receptive skills but on the other side still experience obstacles in applying good reading and listening techniques. Based on these findings, several solutions must be taken, among others, German receptive learning, both reading and listening, should not only emphasize the results (*Verstaendnis*) but should be more emphasized on the process of understanding (*Verstehen*), or just memorizing vocabulary without context. So that students are trained to master how to comprehend text according to the context of its use.

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