

Improving Students Listening Comprehension Through Topdown Technique

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ABSTRAK:. The research aims to measure the implementation of topdown technique on improving students ability at listening comprehension of grade XIak1 at SMKN 1 Panyabungan. The method of this research was Classroom Action Research. The participant in this classroom action research was 25 students of grade XIak1 at SMKN 1 Panyabungan. The instruments consisted of topdown technique, listening comprehension test, observation sheet, and interview, the data of this research was analyzed two method of data analysis. Quantitative data analyzed was used to examining and interpreting data from topdown technique and listening comprehension. The data taken from observation and interview was used qualitative data analysis. The research consisted of two cycles, before first cycles started, the researcher conducted pre test to know students listening comprehension real ability. First Cycle conducted after treatment given, due to the result of first cycle doesn't improve in all aspect. Researcher continued to second cycles at the end of cycle. Three result test to be compared to know students improvement in listening comprehension. The result shows that the topdown technique better improves the students ability at listening comprehension. Students score were obtained from total score of correct answer which is converted to Toeic conversion scale. The findings on this study proved that teaching listening applying topdown technique improved students` listening comprehension. Significance improvement particularly in students ability to answer listening part one; matching pictures with statement. Based on the result of the study topdown technique to be recommended for the teacher in Vocational High School (SMK) to improve students` listening comprehension.

Keywords: topdown technique, listening comprehension, students ability

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BACKGROUND: English is an international language which is spoken by many people around the world. As an international language, it has been widely used not only in English speaking countries but also in the countries whose national languages are not English such as Indonesia. As stated by Hasman (2000) in Ratmanida (2005), the use of English in globalization era has been dramatically increased as by 2000, over 70% of the world science written in English and over 90% of all information in the world is stored in English. Furthermore, he stated that by 2010, the number of people who speak English would exceed the number of native speakers. Thus, in this globalization era, it is important to have sufficient skill to communicate in English especially for students and professional workers.

In order to be able to communicate in English, there are four basic skills that need to be mastered. Those four basic skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four basic skills, listening plays a significant role because it is the first skill that people acquire before acquiring language as a whole.

However, listening is not an easy skill to be acquired. There are several factors that influence listening comprehension. According to Brown and Yule in Duzer (1997), listening comprehension is influenced by four factors which are the listeners (related to the listeners' interest on a topic, background knowledge, etc.), the speakers (related to the using of colloquial language, speech rate, etc.), the content of the messages (the familiarity of the content) and the visual supports (the existence of pictures and gestures).

The skill in listening is not only needed for the sake of communication in English but also needed in order to be successful in any kind of English proficiency tests which are recently widely used by professional workers at work setting place and vocational school. At work setting place, English proficiency tests are often used as part of entrance tests in recruiting new employee. Besides, English proficiency tests are also widely used at school especially at the level of vocational school as the students are prepared for competing in job-market after graduation.

Based on the researcher's preliminary research, in terms of teaching English in SMKN 1 Panyabungan, listening is taught together with speaking, reading and writing. In order to avoid gap between higher proficient students

and the lower ones, English is taught by using leveling system in which the students are grouped based on their proficiency in English. In this case, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is used as a placement test in order to place the students based on their level.

However, based on the result of TOEIC prediction test of the second grade students of SMKN 1 Panyabungan which was held on November 2022, among 200 students who took that test, only 0.5% of them could achieve the TOEIC score up to 400, 12 % of them achieved the scores on the range of 300-400, while 75% of them got score on the range of 200-300. Meanwhile, 16% of the students got scores below 200.

Related to the students' scores in listening comprehension section, only 8.5 % of the students could achieve the scores up to 200. Meanwhile, there were 35% of the students who achieved the scores on the range of 150-200. There were 46 % of the students' scores on the range of 100 -150. Furthermore, there were 10.5 % of the students got score below 100.

The result of TOEIC test above is far from the expectation. It is also stated that each grade has its own target including the target of achievement in TOEIC. As an example, at the second grade of vocational school, in which the students are in elementary level, the students are expected to have TOEIC scores at the range of 305-450. Thus, at the third grade of vocational school, at least the students get TOEIC scores up to 450.

The low scores in TOEIC is also caused by the low scores in listening comprehension section as one of the two sections in TOEIC. Besides, the teacher also said that the students had problems in comprehending spoken texts that make it difficult for them to answer listening comprehension section in TOEIC. It was mainly caused by their limited vocabularies and limited listening strategies. In addition, based on some interviews with the students, it is noted that the students get difficulties to understand the spoken text because the speaker speaks too fast.

The low scores in listening may be caused by some factors, which can be categorized into external and internal factors. The external factors are factors that influence students' listening comprehension which come from the surroundings such as the noise made while the tape is played, the unclear voice produced by the tape and etc. Meanwhile the internal factors are factors which influence listening comprehension that come from the listeners themselves such as the limited vocabulary, limited background knowledge and also limited listening strategies.

The external factors can be overcome by creating conducive environments during the TOEIC test is holding. Meanwhile, in order to limit the internal factors that barrier listening comprehension, teacher needs to help the students by teaching listening through appropriate technique.

In order to improve students' listening comprehension, there were many techniques suggested by the experts. One of them is top-down technique. Top-down is a technique of teaching listening. According to Brown (2001), top-down technique is more concerned with the activation of schemata, with deriving meaning, with global understanding, and with the interpretation of a text. Meanwhile, schemata itself is defined as background knowledge and global understanding (Lingzhu, 2003). In order to activate students' schemata to facilitate top-down processing, one of the activities below can be done in the classroom:

Table 1. Technique to Activate Stored Schemata

Activity	How to do	Purpose
Brainstorming	Call out related words or phrases to be put on the board	These knowledge-oriented activities aim to prepare students by encouraging them to activate stored schemata or acquire relevant types or world knowledge, which will facilitate top-down processing.
Mind-Mapping	Write down words or draw simple pictures in a web	
Discussion	Discussion similar or related issues based on prompt questions or pictures	
Games	Simple word or information-gap games	
Guide-questions	Guess answers to questions on the text	
Picture/Diagram	Complete illustrations with simple drawings or words	
Prediction	Predict contents, characters, setting or sequence of events	
Elimination	Identify the odd one out from a group of pictures or words/phrases	
Skimming	Read a related short text for gist	

Based on the expert statement above to improve students' listening comprehension in SMKN 1 Panyabungan, an action research on the application of top-down technique in teaching listening will be done as one way to overcome internal factors which influence listening comprehension.

METHOD

The design applied in this study was action research. It was called action research because the research was done in the classroom to solve problems that occurred in teaching-learning process.

The action research is a guide for teacher who is interested in improvement and change in their school or classroom. One of the characteristics of this research is using cycles. Each cycle has different problem solving and approach. According to Lewin (in Kemmis, 1992), each cycle is divided into four components, which are planning, taking action, observing and evaluating/reflecting.

RESULT

This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four phases, called plan, action, observation and reflection. Every cycle took four meetings. The time for each meeting was 1 x 45 minutes. The result of the first cycle was used as consideration in order to make revisions and improvement for the second cycle.

As stated in the previous, the observation was done in preliminary study. many of the students got unsatisfying score as described in the table below:

Table 2. Students' Scores in Listening Test I

Students	Test 1	The scores (after conversion)
1	31	135
2	30	130
3	31	135
4	28	120
5	37	170
6	33	145
7	33	145
8	39	180
9	32	140
10	37	170
11	38	175
12	33	145

13	32	140
14	27	115
15	30	130
16	31	135
17	37	170
18	42	195
19	39	180
20	37	170
21	35	160
22	27	115
23	31	135
24	34	150
25	28	120
Mean	33.28	148.2

Based on the data in the table 2 above, the researcher concluded that the majority of the students had unsatisfying scores in listening comprehension. It could be proved by the low scores of the students in listening comprehension test as there were more students who got score below 170 rather than students who got score up to 170.

As a consequence, the researcher made plans, efforts and activities to be done in the first cycle, in order to increase the students' listening comprehension. The problem that the researcher would like to solve was to increase the students' listening comprehension by applying top-down technique in teaching listening.

1. Cycle I

The findings of the research within cycle I was classified into qualitative findings and the quantitative one. The qualitative findings were obtained by analyzing two of three instruments which were interviews and field notes. Meanwhile the quantitative findings were obtained by analyzing the result of listening comprehension test which was held at the end of cycle I. Both findings were analyzed in order to see whether there was any progress achieved within cycle I. Furthermore, the findings were considered in order to improve the treatment for the next cycle.

a. Qualitative findings

The qualitative findings were obtained after analyzing the result of field notes and interviews within cycle I.

1) Field Notes

There were four main things which were observed by using field notes. They were classroom progress, students' participation, students' errors and incident/remarks during teaching learning process.

2. Interview)

The result was concluded from the interview which was done at the end of cycle 1 toward three participants which were chosen randomly. Here are some transcripts of interview:

Researcher : Bagaimana menurutmu tentang teknik top-down dalam belajar 'listening'?

Student 6 : Tadinya saya bingung juga buk waktu ibuk nerangin top-down, istilahnya juga baru denger, tapi pas udah belajar trus bikin latihan, saya jadi lumayan ngerti.

Related to whether or not they interested to the technique, the respondents stated that they were interested with the technique and they were also interested to apply the technique as seen in the transcript of interview below:

Researcher : Kamu tertarik dengan teknik pengajaran listening yang diberikan?

Student 6 : Tertarik miss, soalnya latihannya banyak variasi, jadi nggak boring

Furthermore, the students also stated that the technique helped them understand the listening material and enjoy listening especially through the activities which were derived from top-down technique such as discriminating the emotions, guessing the speaker, etc and activities in schemata building such as brainstorming, prediction, etc.

b. Quantitative findings

The quantitative findings were obtained after analyzing the result of listening comprehension test. The result of listening comprehension test which was held at the end of cycle I was called test 2. The result of test 2 was compared with the result of test 1. The improvement was then percentage as described below:

Table 3. The result of Test 2

Students	Test 1	Test 2	Progress (%)

1	135	170	20.58
2	130	145	10.34
3	135	150	10
4	120	145	17.24
5	170	175	2.85
6	145	170	14.7
7	145	160	9.37
8	180	190	5.26
9	140	170	17.64
10	170	180	5.55
11	175	210	16.66
12	145	145	0
13	140	175	20
14	115	130	11.53
15	130	145	10.34
16	135	170	20.58
17	170	195	12.82
18	195	215	9.3
19	180	195	7.69
20	170	185	8.1
21	160	170	5.88
22	115	150	23.33
23	135	145	6.89
24	150	170	11.76
25	120	135	11.11
	148.2	167.6	11.58 %

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the students' average score in test 2 is 167.6. If it is compared with the average score in test 1, it

increased 11.58%. It indicated that teaching listening by applying top-down technique can improve the students' listening comprehension.

The students' progress in the test can be described in details in the figure below:

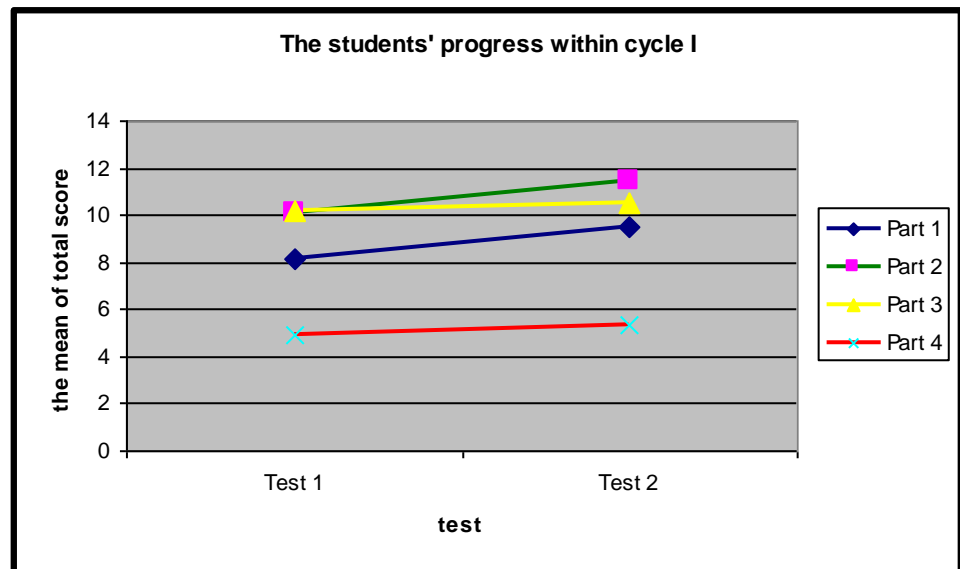


Chart 1. The students' progress in details within cycle I

The figure above can be described by considering the following condition:

- 1) The mean of total score was obtained by averaging the total number of correct answer (total score) of all students in each part.
- 2) The total score was not converted to the conversion table as in table 2 due to the fact that the students' scores might be different with when we converse them after totalling the whole score before totalling. The blue lines shows the students' progress in part 1, and the green line shows the students' progress in part 2, then the yellow line shows the students' progress in part 3, while the red line shows the students' progress in part 4.
- 3) The mean of total scores in part 2 and 3 were higher than the mean of total scores in part 1 and 4 were cause by the more questions were contained in part 2 and 3. As stated in the previous chapter, part 1 and 4 contains 20 questions in each part while there are 30 questions contain in part 2 and 3.

The result of figure 6 can be described as follow:

- 1) Within cycle I, the students had the higher progress in answering questions in part I and 2, while they got the lower progress in answering questions in part 3 and 4.
- 2) Through the figure above, it also can be seen that the mean of total score of the students in part 1 increased from 8.12 to 9.48. In part 2, it

increased from 10.08 to 11.48. In part 3, it increased from 10.16 to 10.48. While in part 4, the mean of total score increased from 4.92 to 5.36.

Based on the result of test 2, it also can be seen that the number of students who could pass the minimum score became 15 students. It means that, the percentage of the number of students who could pass the minimum score increased from 32% to 60%. It increased for 28% as shown in the graphic below:

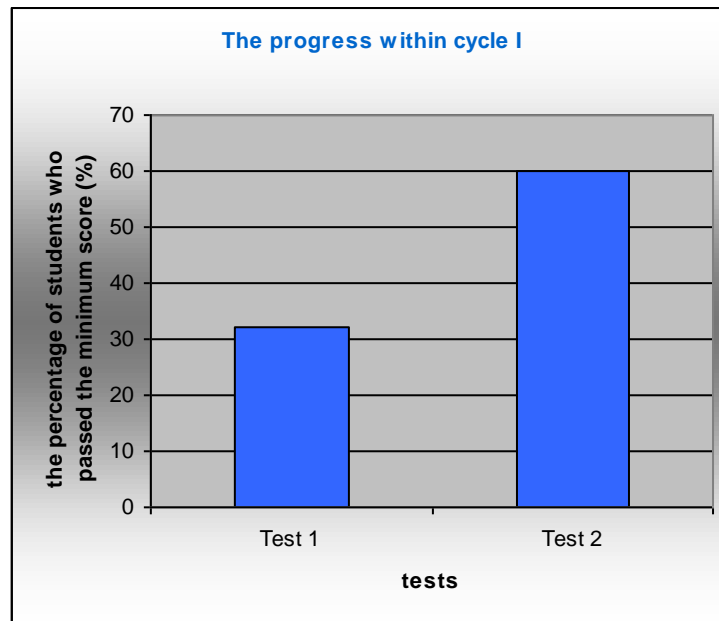


Chart 2. The Percentage Of Students Who Passed the minimum scores

Furthermore, through the table of students' progress also, it can be seen individual progress of the students. The students' individual progress ranged from 0%-23%. While few students had significant progress up to 20% such as students 1, 16 and 22, 44% of them had low progress which less then 10% even there was one of them who had no progress at all.

The researcher and collaborative teacher analyzed all data which were obtained from the three instruments. Based on the analysis, some changes should be made in order to make the aim of the research succeed, such as:

- 1) In giving explanation, the teacher needed to give clear explanation especially the key words, as those were important for the students in order to help them understand the listening materials.
- 2) The teacher needed to prepare the materials which were more familiar to the students' daily life and the students major so it is of students' interest.

- 3) The teacher needed to give more exercise to the part of listening test which has low progress

In conclusion, based on the results which was obtained from the three instruments namely listening comprehension tests, field notes and interviews it was found that teaching listening using top-down technique can improve students' listening comprehension. However some weaknesses were found during the action that caused not all students achieved the significant progress as being expected before. Therefore, the process needed to be continued to cycle II as he result of cycle I was not fully success.

Cycle II

1. The implementation of cycle II

Based on the findings which were got from the first cycle, the researcher and the collaborative teacher planned the action for the second cycle. The steps were the same as in the first cycle. There were also four stages in the second cycle; planning, action, observation and reflection. Basically the researcher would like to perform better than in the first cycle.

While the treatment given, in this cycle the collaborative teacher continuing observing the teaching learning process by filling up field notes form. Beside that, the collaborative teacher also observed whether the teacher had done the changes or not.

Furthermore, through the field notes in cycle two, it showed that the class atmosphere becomes much better as almost all of the students gave positive response toward the teachers' questions both individual and collective.

a. Reflection

In this phase, after collecting the data, the researcher discussed the data that she has got with the collaborative teacher. The datum which were obtained from the field notes, interview and tests were analyzed in order to decide whether the action needed to be continued to the next cycle or not.

2. Cycle II

a. Qualitative findings

The qualitative findings were obtained after analyzing the result of field notes and interviews within cycle II.

- 1) Field Notes; classroom progress, students participation, students errors

There was no significant incident happened during the teaching learning process within cycle II.

- 2) Interview

Based on the interviews, it was found that the students became more understand about top-down after they were given more treatment and exercises. They were also stated that they became more confident for listening after they got the treatment. As seen in the transcript below:

Researcher : Apakah kamu merasa terbantu dengan teknik yang diberikan?

Student 6 : Tekniknya nolong banget buk, soalnya bikin ujian jadi lebih PD

b. Quantitative findings

The result of the test 3 can be seen in the table below:

Table 4. The Result of Test 3 Compared with Test 1 and Test 2

Students	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
1	135	170	190
2	130	145	175
3	135	150	185
4	120	145	175
5	170	175	195
6	145	170	215
7	145	160	175
8	180	190	215
9	140	170	210
10	170	180	215
11	175	210	245
12	145	145	170
13	140	175	220
14	115	130	170
15	130	145	180

16	135	170	220
17	170	195	250
18	195	215	250
19	180	195	240
20	170	185	240
21	160	170	195
22	115	150	190
23	135	145	175
24	150	170	190
25	120	135	185
Mean	148.2	167.6	202.8

Based on the table above, it can be seen that, in the test 3, the students got higher scores than the scores in the test 2. Beside that, the student whose score didn't increase in cycle I, also get improvement in cycle II.

The students' progress in details can be described as follows:

1) Students' overall progress in part 1

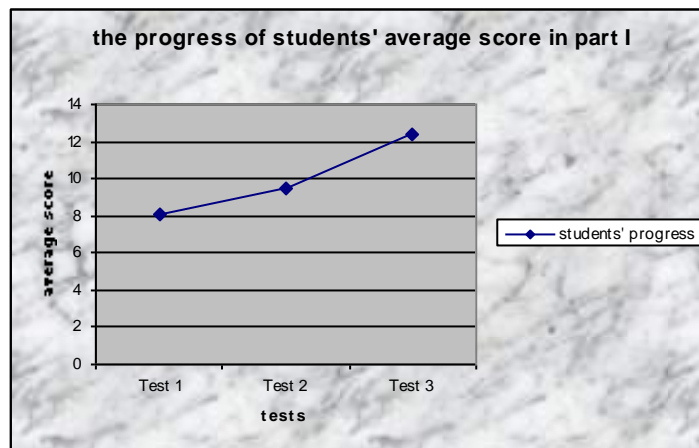


Chart 3. Students' Overall Progress in Part I

Based on the figure above, it can be seen that the students' average score increased within test 1 and test 2. Meanwhile the scores increased more within cycle 2. The students got significant progress in this part because in every meeting the students were asked to bring

one picture and they were asked to name everything in the picture in order to improve their vocabulary and furthermore they were asked to make general statement about the picture. They were also trained to try giving statement on their friends' picture.

2) Students' progress in Part 2

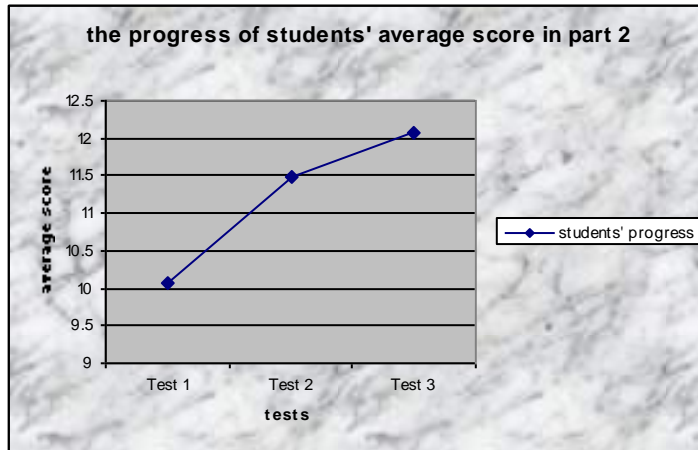


Chart 4. Students' Overall Progress in Part 2

The figure above showed that the students get more progress in cycle 1 rather than cycle 2. It happened because the exercises on this part were more emphasized in cycle 1 rather than cycle 2. However, there was still improvement within cycle 2 although it's not as significant as in the previous cycle.

3) Students' progress in part 3

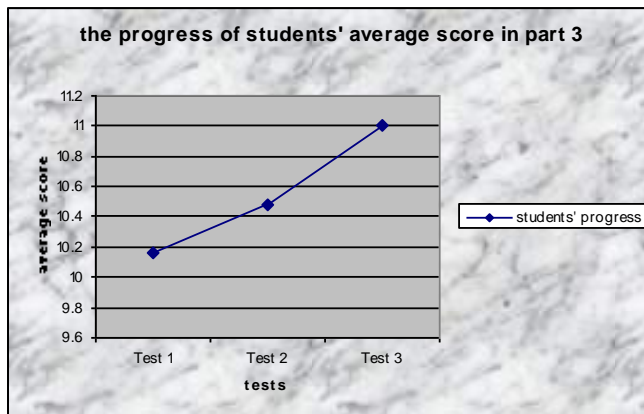


Chart 5. Students' Overall Progress in Part 3

The figure above showed that the students got more progress within cycle two. It happened because the more exercise given on this part within this cycle. Among the four part of listening test, the students got the lower progress in part 3.

4) Students' progress in part 4

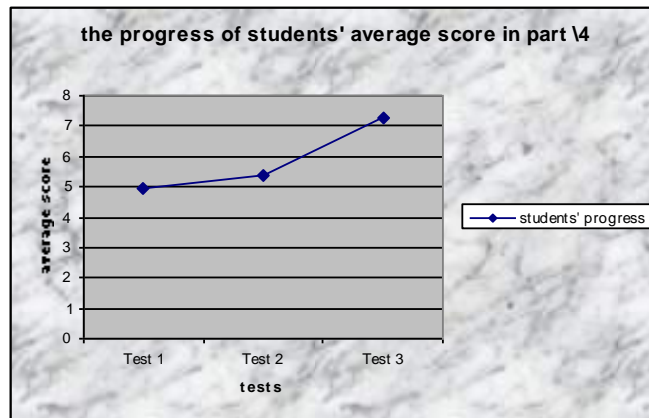


Chart 6. Students' Overall Progress in Part 4

The figure above also showed the more progress in cycle 2 rather than cycle 1 that happened because the more exercise given in cycle 2 rather than cycle 1.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that there were improvement on the students' scores in listening comprehension tests from the test 1 to test 3. The improvement can be seen in details through the graphic below:

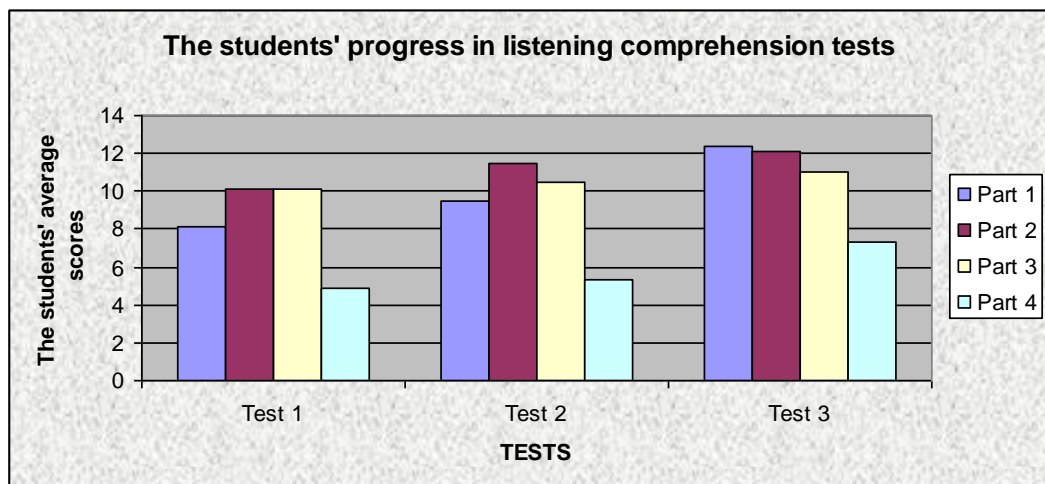


Chart 7. Students' Overall Progress in all Parts of Listening Comprehension Tests

The graphic above showed the students' average scores progress in each part of listening comprehension tests from test 1 to test 3. The graphic above also showed that the students got the more progress in part 1 while the less progress was got in part 3.

DISCUSSION

Some theoreticians and researcher have described and defined top-down technique in their books or in the form of articles. Based on their

theories and findings, it can be concluded that the application of top-down technique in teaching listening toward the appropriate level of students can improve their listening comprehension.

In relation to this research, The students' average total score were increased from the test 1 to test 3. While in the test 1, the students' average score was less than 150, in test 3, it becomes up to 200. It indicates the students' improvement in listening comprehension after the treatment given. Beside that, based on the result of interview and field notes, it was also shown that the students respond positively toward the application of top-down technique.

This fact is in line with what has been stated by Brown and Yule in Duzer (1997), who stated that, beside listener, speaker and the content of the message, the visual support also influence the listening comprehension. Thus, the students enjoy listening while looking at the picture. Beside that, having picture to guide them in listening, also make students more ready for the incoming oral text because pictures are helpful in activating schemata that will ease them understand the spoken text as stated by Lingzhu (2003), working with the picture and diagram is helpful to facilitate top-down processing that finally help them understand the oral text.

CONCLUSION

The main finding of this research is that the application of top-down technique can improve the students' listening comprehension significantly. It can be seen through the improvement of the result of students' listening comprehension test. Beside that, the result of field notes and also showed that the students became more active in teaching learning process. It happens because of the various activities which were derived from top-down technique which develop their top-down processing skill. Furthermore, the result of interview also indicates that the students viewed the technique to be helpful in understanding spoken language.

Based on the result of this research, it can be seen that the application of top-down technique can improve the students' listening comprehension which can be seen to the improvement of their scores in listening comprehension tests. However, before implementing this technique, the teacher needs to prepare the students with sufficient vocabulary. Beside that, the teacher needs to prepare supporting media such as pictures or games that stimulate the students' activeness.

Thus, based on the result of this research the researcher suggests the English teacher especially those who concerns on the teaching of English for vocational school to use this technique. However, in choosing the material to be given in order to develop students' top-down processing skill, the teacher

needs to consider several aspects such as the level of students' proficiency, interest and level of vocabulary.

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