

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The chapter reveals the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the research, the research scope, the significance of the research, the research framework, and previous studies.

A. Background

This study investigates the English listening comprehension abilities of *mahasantris* in Islamic Boarding School and explores their perspectives on this specific ability. The aim is to obtain *mahasantris*' perspectives on the ease or difficulty they face when listening to English and to identify particular problems they face in this context. Analyzing the English listening comprehension and perspectives of *mahasantris* in Islamic Boarding School contributes to developing more efficient English learning methods that adapt to their specific requirement.

In this context, *mahasantris* refers to a community of students who live in *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) while studying for a college degree. These students have special traits that differentiate them apart from their *non-pesantren* counterparts (Alfinnas, 2018). *Mahasantris* not only study general subjects but also engage in intensive religious studies, which affects their schedule and study load. Integrating religious and general education creates a different learning environment, where they must balance both aspects of education (Ikhwan, 2014). They often have active schedules and limited resources, requiring a customized learning strategy to improve their listening comprehension and other English language abilities.

Moreover, learning English in Islamic Boarding School has its challenges that differ from those in regular schools. The curriculum focuses more on religious education in Islamic Boarding School, and English is often taught as a secondary subject with limited time and resources (Suardi et al., 2017). However, mastery of English is essential for students to access information and wider educational

opportunities (Alfinnas, 2018). Islamic Boarding Schools may employ less varied materials and less intensive English teaching methods than public educational facilities. Limited resources, like language laboratories and modern instructional materials, could make learning English challenging. As a result, this research is essential to identifying specific challenges to English listening learning in Islamic Boarding School environments and providing recommendations to educators on how to enhance their students' listening abilities effectively.

In the context of language learning, listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Listening is the first skill that must be mastered by the students because, without good listening skills, the communication process cannot run well (Hamouda, 2013). Listening is receiving what the speaker says, making and showing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker and answering, and creating meaning with participation, creativity, and empathy (Gilakjani & Souburi, 2016). To learn listening skills a conscious effort to enhance listening abilities through consistent practice and comprehension. Listening comprehension refers to the ability to understand spoken messages in a language that has been acquired (Rahman et al., 2019). It involves identifying words, phrases, and sentence patterns employed in conversations or listening materials and comprehending the message's significance and meaning. Listening comprehension is crucial in acquiring the English language as it involves the listener's active participation in generating meaning (Rost, 2002; Hamouda, 2013).

Listening comprehension problems in English language learning can be diverse and complex. Learners commonly face problems, including adapting to the speed of native speakers' speech, struggling with new accents, and identifying vocabulary in different contexts. *Mahasantris* encounters many issues when trying to comprehend different languages, especially English. The problems involve difficulties in comprehending pronunciation, a restricted vocabulary, and problems with concentration (Warohma et al., 2020). In addition, listening comprehension problems can also develop from the use of unfamiliar phrases or idioms, complex

sentence structures, or the use of uncommon words. Knowing about one's listening comprehension problems is a component of personal knowledge. Language learners are generally aware of these problems, which they perceive as an unpleasant yet necessary aspect of acquiring a new language (Goh, 2000). The major listening comprehension problems are a lack of background knowledge and the ability to recognize stress in pronouncing words. Listening comprehension problems are divided into seven categories. These are problems related to the listening material, the linguistic feature, the concentration failure, the psychological aspects, the listener, the speaker, and the physical condition (Hamouda, 2013).

Likewise, the results of preliminary observations at Islamic Boarding School reveal certain primary patterns of the listening comprehension problems learners face in these institutions. This observation showed that many learners were challenged in their listening comprehension practices. The correct accuracy score from listening comprehension practice, using questions from British Council hearing B2, was below 50% by 20 *mahasantris* (See Appendix 4). They stated that although they were familiar with some words, they could not remember their meaning immediately. They also expressed difficulty in understanding the intended message, though they were familiar with the literal meaning of words. The British Council Level B2 is utilized in preliminary studies due to its alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an internationally accepted standard for evaluating English language proficiency. Furthermore, adopting the British Council's B2 level or qualifications framework could present an accurate framework for researchers to investigate problems related to effectively comprehending the English listened to by participants in the study.

Based on the collected results, it is certain that conducting this research is of critical importance. *Mahasantris* in *pesantren* encounter several obstacles to improving their English listening abilities, which are affected by internal factors such as motivation and confidence, as well as external issues such as lack of support and ineffective teaching techniques (Risdianto, 2016). Risdianto's theory is very relevant to the facts faced by *mahasantris* in this field. That, based on the results of

preliminary observations, shows that many *mahasantris* face obstacles in practising listening comprehension as explained in the paragraph above. *Mahasantris* faced they were familiar with some words, but they could not remember their meaning immediately. They also expressed difficulty in understanding the intended message, though they were familiar with the literal meaning of words. Therefore, the current research is very essential for thoroughly identifying and comprehending these obstacles and challenges effectively and specifically to the context. By obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the problems faced by *mahasantris*, educational institutions can develop more suitable educational programs and offer relevant assistance. Moreover, this research has the potential to contribute substantially to the academic literature on English language acquisition in Islamic Boarding School settings, an area that has not been thoroughly investigated.

Furthermore, many previous studies have contributed significantly to the information base in understanding the problem of English listening comprehension among *mahasantris*. Research conducted by Adhimah (2020), focused on students' difficulties in listening comprehension at the Edi Mancoro *Pesantren* Language Village. The next research comes from Hermida (2021). This research focused on analyzing EFL students' difficulties in understanding listening in English and identifying the main problems that inhibit listening comprehension. This research also aims to suggest potential solutions to improve listening skills among EFL learners. Other research comes from Sari & Fithriyana (2019). This research focused on the problems EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students face in listening comprehension. However, there are still gaps in the literature that require further research. Previous research tends to focus on the problems that learners face in listening comprehension. The current study may expand insights into listening comprehension problems among college students by focusing on a different context. By investigating *mahasantris'* perceptions of their listening skills and identifying their specific problems, the current study might fill this knowledge gap and provide a deeper understanding of how contextual factors affect English language learning in Islamic Boarding School.

B. Research Questions

Based on the explanation above, the current study may discuss several things.

- 1) How do *mahasantris*' perceive their English listening comprehension ability?
- 2) What listening comprehension problems do *mahasantris* encounter when listening to English?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions above, this research is aimed at obtaining the two following objectives:

- 1) To find out *mahasantris*' perception of their English listening comprehension ability.
- 2) To find out the kinds of listening comprehension problems encountered by *mahasantris* in an Islamic Boarding School in Bandung.

D. Research Scope

The current study focuses on the English listening comprehension problems experienced by *mahasantris* who are currently in their 7th semester at an Islamic Boarding School in Bandung. It identifies specific problems they face, including difficulties with understanding spoken English in academic and everyday contexts, as well as internal and external factors contributing to these problems.

E. Research Significance

a) Theoretical Significance

The current study contributes significantly to the academic literature of English language learning in a *pesantren* environment, especially regarding English listening comprehension. In addition to analyzing their perceptions about their ability to understand English listening comprehension, this research can be a significant reference point for future studies seeking to learn English within a comparable setting. These findings may be used as a base for future studies to develop more efficient learning models that provide the specific requirements of *mahasantris* in an Islamic boarding school.

b) Practical Significance

The research findings of this study might be valuable for *pesantren* educators who might develop improved English learning approaches, especially in listening comprehension. Identifying specific problems in learning comprehension may help listening practice schedules to better match *mahasantris'* needs and time concerns. Furthermore, by acquiring a deeper understanding of *mahasantris'* perspectives and problems, educators may provide more focused instruction, enhancing their confidence and competence in English language use. This research might motivate other educational institutions to adopt a contextualized and flexible learning method that meets their *mahasantris'* specific needs.

F. Conceptual Framework

The current study attempts to comprehend *mahasantris'* perception of their listening comprehension ability and the problems they face in listening comprehension. Therefore, the current study starts with a breakdown of a conceptual framework regarding the topics. Furthermore, two variables that hold a key in this research are listening to English and learners' perceptions.

Mahasantris refers to a community of students who live in *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) while studying for a college degree. An Islamic boarding school is an educational institution that provides both educational instruction and boarding for *mahasantris*, with a curriculum that is centered around Islamic teachings, aiming to achieve effective educational goals and a quality boarding school, especially in the religious field (Maimun et al., 2021). These students have special traits that differentiate them apart from their non-Islamic Boarding School counterparts (Alfinnas, 2018). *Mahasantris* not only study general subjects but also immerse themselves in intensive religious studies, which impacts their timetable and study load.

Integrating religion and general education creates a different learning environment, where *mahasantris* must balance both aspects of education (Ikhwan, 2014). The distinct features of their school environment involve specific educational approaches, especially when it comes to acquiring English language skills.

Acquiring English language skills in an Islamic Boarding School presents different challenges that differentiate it from regular educational institutions. The curriculum focuses more on religious education in Islamic Boarding School, and English is often taught as a secondary subject with limited time and resources (Suardi et al., 2017). However, mastery of English is essential for students to access information and wider educational opportunities (Alfinnas, 2018).

On the other hand, in learning a foreign language, one of the most important components of language acquisition is listening. Out of the four main areas of language skills called listening, speaking, reading, and writing, listening is the most important of all (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In the listening comprehension process, listeners try to construct a meaning when they get the information from the listening source (Goss, 1982). Listening comprehension means that a person understands what he/she has heard. If he/she learns the text through hearing it, he/she will understand it (Brown & Yule, 1983). Listening comprehension is an interactive process in which listeners are involved in constructing meaning. Listeners understand the oral input through sound discrimination, previous knowledge, grammatical structures, stress and intonation, and other linguistic or non-linguistic clues (Rost, 2002; Hamouda, 2013).

In the meantime, EFL learners have crucial problems in listening comprehension because universities pay attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not significant parts of many books and teachers do not consider these skills in their classes (Hamouda, 2013). Listening comprehension problems are divided into seven categories. These are problems related to the listening material, the linguistic feature, the concentration failure, the psychological aspects, the listener, the speaker, and the physical condition (Hamouda, 2013). Additionally, based on Goh (2000), Vandergrift (2003), Nowrouzi & Tam (2015), and Hamouda (2013), the problems consist of issues like not enough prior knowledge, problems in identifying word stress in pronunciation, linguistic challenges, psychological aspects, and physical constraints that frustrate understanding.

Similarly, student perception is the subjective comprehension and interpretation of their abilities in listening comprehension and problems. Student perception offers insights into learners' perspectives on their listening abilities, the problems they face, and the various factors they perceive contribute to the problems they face (Hasan, 2000). This subjective viewpoint can enrich the study by providing a nuanced understanding of the learners' experiences. Inan-Karagul & Yuksel (2014) stated that perception is somebody supposed to learn to assess and show their view toward using something, whether they agree or not about what they learn. In line with Hong, Kaur et al., (2004) also mentioned that students' perceptions are students' opinions of interpretation toward something that occurred in the teaching and learning process in class and formed with submissions or arguments for the classmate or teacher to expand the learning activity. It can be concluded that the students had their own beliefs toward something that they caught from the teaching and learning process and how they extended toward it.

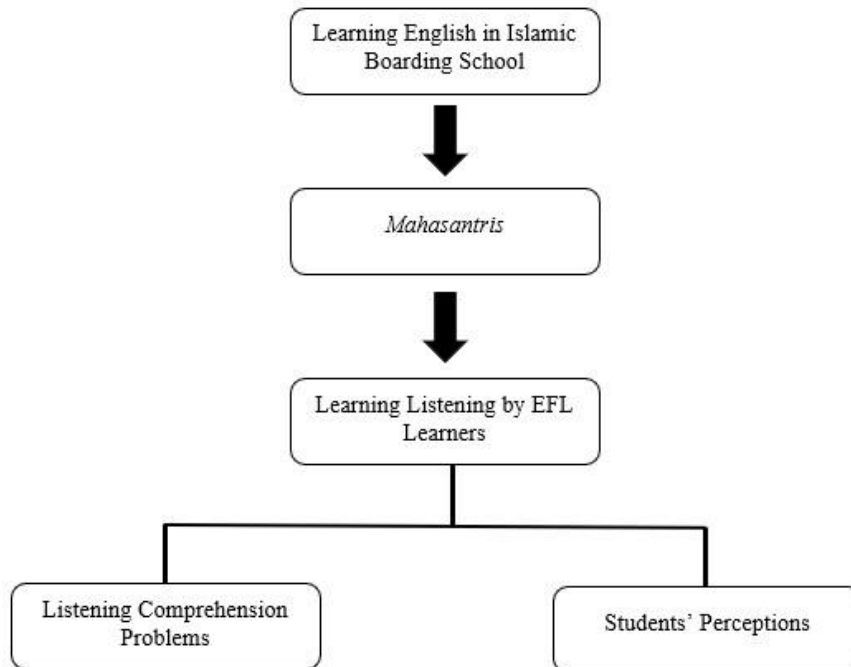


Figure 1.1 The relation among mahasantris, Islamic Boarding School, learning listening, listening comprehension, listening comprehension problems, and students' perceptions.

G. Previous Study

The research relevant to the topic English listening comprehension problems in an Islamic boarding school has been conducted by many people. It shows that listening comprehension problems are an interesting object to study. The first previous study came from Hermida (2021). The research focus of the study was to analyze the difficulties EFL students face in comprehending listening in English and to identify the main problems and potential solutions to improve listening comprehension. This study aimed to analyze the difficulties faced by EFL students in comprehending listening in English, identify the main problems hindering listening comprehension, and suggest potential solutions to improve listening skills. Additionally, the study aimed to explore various factors that affect listening comprehension in second language learners and strategies for enhancing listening skills in the classroom. The study employed a quantitative method with 50 second-year students from a private Islamic boarding school in Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, as participants. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with selected students. The results of the study can be concluded that the majority of the students encountered problems in listening comprehension because of several factors, including a limited chance to repeat the recording material, the listening length and speed, poor grammar and unfamiliar vocabulary, the lack of contextual, culture and background knowledge that the students had, and the accent or pronunciation of the speakers. The study concluded that these difficulties stemmed from factors such as the quality of recorded materials, speed of speech, cultural differences, and lack of motivation.

Second, a study that has been reviewed is coming from 'Adhimah (2020). The research focused on students' difficulties in listening comprehension at Kampung Bahasa of Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School. The study aimed to identify these difficulties, determine the factors causing them, and propose strategies to overcome them. The research method involved data collection through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The participants included 10 students and 3 teachers at Kampung Bahasa of Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School.

Instruments used were questionnaires with Likert Scale for quantitative data, observational data, and semistructured interviews. This research was conducted at *Kampung Bahasa* of Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School. The method used in this research was a descriptive design with a qualitative approach. This research used three data collection techniques: observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The study results revealed that students at *Kampung Bahasa* of Edi Mancoro Islamic Boarding School faced difficulties in listening comprehension, including problems related to listening materials, basic linguistic skills, concentration, psychological characteristics, and more. The conclusion drawn from the research findings highlighted the importance of addressing these difficulties through strategies such as using Bahasa and English mix, incorporating English songs and movies, and making listening classes more engaging.

The other study is coming from Hung Dongi (2022). The research focused on investigating the difficulties faced by English-major students in listening comprehension tasks. The purpose of the study was to investigate the difficulties faced by English-major students in listening comprehension tasks and to categorize these difficulties into three main areas: listening materials, the role of the listener, and the physical setting. The study aimed to help teachers find better teaching methods to improve students' listening skills. The study employed 38 English-major students who study English as a foreign language in a four-year English undergraduate program. The participants voluntarily took part in the study and were given a three-part questionnaire with 20 items to gather data related to difficulties in listening comprehension tasks. The results obtained from the study showed the specific difficulties students faced within each category. The study concluded that future research should focus on finding possible solutions for students to overcome these listening problems and suggested that exploring different groups of students and involving English teachers could provide valuable insights.

However, research on English listening comprehension problems encountered specially by *Mahasantris* outside Indonesia has not been found. The current study has the same focus as previous research, namely investigating

problems related to English listening comprehension. This current study investigates the problems faced by *Mahasantris* in English listening comprehension and *Mahasantris*' perceptions of English listening comprehension. A qualitative design is chosen as it allows for an exploration of the research problem, delving into the intricate details of individual experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2012). The current study uses two instruments different from previous research: questionnaires and interviews. It targets a specific population of 6th-semester *Mahasantris* to explore how their different educational environment and several backgrounds of *mahasantris* influence their English listening comprehension.

Despite the similarities in focus, a significant research gap remains unaddressed. Previous studies have primarily centered on general student populations, often overlooking specific subgroups such as *Mahasantris*, who may face disparate challenges due to their distinct educational and cultural contexts. Moreover, much of the existing literature employs either quantitative methods or a limited range of qualitative tools, which may not fully capture the nuanced experiences of learners.

