

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this section, an overview of the various aspects concerning the problems explored in this study is provided. These encompass the background of the research, research questions, research purposes, significance of the research, research framework, hypotheses, and previous studies.

A. Background of the Research

This research aims to examine whether there is any significant correlation between EFL students' dictation ability and their overall listening comprehension. Dictation and listening comprehension are crucial skills in language learning and communication. Dictation involves transcribing spoken language into written form, while listening comprehension focuses on understanding and interpreting spoken language. The mastery of listening skills holds great importance in effective communication. According to Brown (2004), listening plays a significant role in our interactions, as people tend to listen more than they speak. However, in the realm of second language (L2) listening, multiple studies by Leonard (2019) have generated diverse claims regarding the nature of successful listening. Some argue that skilled listening in L2 involves accurately transcribing spoken words, which represents a bottom-up processing approach (Field, 2003a). They consider this aspect indispensable for learning and proficiency in L2 listening (Wilson, 2003).

The term "dictation ability" refers to the skill of listeners in accurately identifying spoken texts (Leonard, 2019). This involves the cognitive processes of recognizing individual speech sounds and determining word boundaries, which are necessary for segmenting the continuous stream of speech into meaningful words (Sheppard & Butler, 2017). It is important to recognize that this kind of processing is not automatically developed as a fundamental aspect of listening skill. According to Field (2003a), a lack of proficiency in transcribing spoken language can lead to difficulties in understanding spoken information, as listeners may struggle to

receive and interpret the given information effectively. Therefore, possessing strong dictation ability has the potential to enhance listeners' overall comprehension in their listening.

Although the importance of listening is widely acknowledged, it is commonly agreed upon that both transcription (bottom-up processing) and top-down processing skills are crucial in the process of listening (Siegel & Siegel, 2015). However, researchers have long debated the relative significance of these processing skills in listening comprehension (Leonard, 2019). Advocates of the former viewpoint argue that breakdowns in understanding spoken words often occur due to errors in bottom-up processing, such as misinterpreting words, rather than errors in top-down processing (Field, 2003a; Sheppard & Butler, 2017). Conversely, others contend that skilled listening is primarily defined by the use of higher-level strategies, such as applying background knowledge and context, rather than decoding alone (Chamot, 2005; Vandergrift, 1997).

Additionally, according to Field (2008), individuals with varying levels of listening skills utilize context in distinct manners. Less skilled listeners rely on context to compensate for their limited comprehension, whereas skilled listeners employ it to enhance their understanding of the audio content. Furthermore, Field suggests that the proficiency to effectively grasp the context of the present input can only be attained after successfully decoding the previous input. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the listening comprehension of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students heavily depends on their dictation abilities.

According to preliminary observation conducted in SMPN 56 Bandung, which involved interviews with EFL teachers and seventh-grade students, it was found that there is a variation in the students' proficiency in listening to spoken English text. This was evident from the range of listening scores, which varied from below 70 to above 85. Some students admitted having difficulty understanding what they heard during the listening exercises, while others claimed to be able to comprehend and recognize the spoken text effectively. Based on these findings, the current research aims to investigate the correlation between the dictation ability of EFL listeners and their listening comprehension by analyzing the scores of both aspects.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background above, the problems to be discussed in this research are formulated into the following questions:

1. What are the students' dictation abilities?
2. What are the students' listening comprehension?
3. How significant is the correlation between the students' dictation abilities and their overall listening comprehension?

C. Research Purposes

The purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To find out the students' dictation abilities.
2. To find out the students' listening comprehension.
3. To find out how significant the correlation between students' dictation abilities and their overall listening comprehension is.

D. Significance of the Research

This research is expected to provide some valuable advantages not only pedagogically but also theoretically.

1. Pedagogical Significance

Comprehending the correlation between EFL students' dictation ability and their overall listening comprehension, English teachers are expected to incorporate listening activities such as dictation which help EFL learners develop their aural decoding skills that eventually improve their listening comprehension as well.

2. Theoretical Significance

In theory, this study is anticipated to serve as a valuable resource for researchers investigating the connection between the dictation proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and their comprehension skills in listening.

E. Conceptual Framework

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, listening comprehension plays a crucial role in language acquisition. It allows students to comprehend spoken English and effectively communicate with native speakers. One aspect that has been closely linked to listening comprehension is dictation ability. Dictation exercises involve listening to spoken text and transcribing it accurately. A lack of proficiency in transcribing spoken language can lead to difficulties in understanding spoken information, as listeners may struggle to receive and interpret the given information effectively (Field, 2003a).

The development of many countries can be greatly enhanced by possessing strong English language abilities, as English is the most commonly utilized language worldwide for numerous international communication purposes, including education, diplomacy, politics, and trade (Madya, 2002). In the case of Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language. Recognizing its significance, the current curriculum in Indonesia, known as *Kurikulum Merdeka*, requires the inclusion of English as a subject in specific education levels, starting from junior high schools.

According to Afsharrad and Nafchi (2015), listening is considered to have the most significant role in communication among the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This claim is supported by a study conducted by Brown (2004), which suggests that listening comprehension contributes to the success of language acquisition and the development of other language skills. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) further state that listening accounts for 40-50% of communication time, while speaking comprises 25-30%, reading 11-16%, and writing approximately 9%. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that language acquisition can only occur when language learners absorb enough comprehensible input through listening.

According to Brown (2004), when it comes to understanding spoken words, listeners use two main methods: bottom-up processes and top-down processes. Bottom-up processes refer to the various steps involved in constructing meaning from the input received, such as decoding phonemes, syllables, words, and phrases

(Cross, 2009). This means that certain skills, like using knowledge of syntax to determine word relationships and identifying word boundaries, are necessary. The specific subset of processes used to identify words, including recognizing phonemes and breaking down spoken text into words, is known as dictation (Sheppard & Butler, 2017). On the other hand, top-down processes involve using background knowledge, context, and other metacognitive strategies to understand the input received (Vandergrift, 1997).

As mentioned in the background, it is believed that a poor ability to accurately transcribe spoken words may hinder the use of higher-level cognitive strategies in processing information, while a better ability to transcribe may benefit the listener in employing such strategies effectively (Wilson, 2003). Many instances of high-level breakdowns in listening comprehension stem from errors at lower levels, requiring listeners to have access to perceptual information before they can apply their contextual knowledge (Field, 2003b). For example, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listener who misinterprets the sentence "I won't buy this car" as "I want to buy this car" is demonstrating a mistake in distinguishing individual speech sounds (phonemes). This error subsequently leads the listener to an incorrect understanding of what they have heard and what might follow. Therefore, achieving good listening comprehension relies on listeners being proficient in the bottom-up processes involved. This also explains why dictation ability holds importance in listening skills. Field (2003b) further suggests that there are other factors that typically hinder listening comprehension during dictation, including the following:

1. Listener knows the word but attributes the wrong sense.
2. Listener couldn't identify a slight change in pronunciation for a word they already know.
3. Listener is familiar with the word when reading, but not when hearing it spoken.
4. Listener is unable to separate the word from a continuous speech and understand it individually.

These challenges suggest that a good reader does not mean a good listener. Therefore, as the learner progresses to become a skilled L2 listener, they must strive to overcome these challenges.

F. Hypotheses

The current research establishes a relationship between the two variables; dictation ability as the X-variable and listening comprehension as the Y-variable. The term "hypotheses" refers to statements made by a researcher in a quantitative study, where they predict the potential outcome of a relationship between different attributes or characteristics (Creswell, 2012). In this particular research, it is suggested that there is a meaningful connection between students' dictation scores and their listening comprehension scores. The hypotheses formulated for this study are presented below:

- a) Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between EFL students' dictation ability and their overall listening comprehension.
- b) Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant correlation between EFL students' dictation ability and their overall listening comprehension.

G. Previous Studies

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between dictation exercises and understanding spoken language in second language (L2) listening. In a study conducted by Destiana et al. (2019), they conducted a true experimental research to explore the impact of incorporating dictation exercises on the development of aural decoding skills, which in turn had a significant positive effect on learners' listening comprehension. The researchers used running dictation exercises as a tool to enhance the input during the study, with the main objective being to assess the effectiveness of dictation in enhancing learners' listening abilities. In contrast, the current research specifically focuses on directly examining the association between dictation ability and listening comprehension. The participants in this study are junior high school students who have been chosen to represent the research sample.

Other study (Leonard, 2019a) investigating the relationship between aural decoding and its outcome in listening also shows that accurate dictation and good comprehension have positive correlation. 25 intermediate to advanced university students learning Spanish were involved in this correlational study. However, this

previous study was applied in context of Spanish as the target language. Therefore, it should be taken into account that the input is less problematic as Spanish has much more transparent orthography than L2 like English does (Leonard, 2019a). To this extent, the current research is different from the former as English has lower correspondence in phoneme to grapheme and is orthographically more opaque.

Afsharrad and Nafchi (2015) conducted a true experimental study, demonstrating that integrating exercises aimed at enhancing aural decoding skills significantly impacts the listening comprehension abilities of beginner learners. The research utilized transcription exercises as an input enhancement tool, with the primary objective of assessing their effectiveness in improving the listening skills of elementary-level students. In contrast, the present study specifically concentrates on directly investigating the relationship between proficiency level of dictation (aural decoding) and listening comprehension.

