

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, research framework, and previous researches.

### **A. Background**

Listening is one of the skills that EFL students may find difficult to master. Listening difficulties can be defined as listener's failure in processing the message directly. According to Yilmaz (2015), listening comes through four variables; the message, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting. That is why when there is a problem in listening, it may seem hard to find out the cause as there are many factors which can easily affect the performance of listening.

Test is a limited way to measure students' abilities after passing the understanding process in learning. The test is mostly used for assessment that is claimed to define the level of knowledge of the test takers. Besides, the test may be used to gain more information about what level of comprehension the students are at the moment, to help decide what to teach next. In some cases of English tests, students are claimed to have problems in doing a listening test.

Limited observation in the English Education Department of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung shows that the students considered listening challenging because it is rarely learned by most students at their previous school. English learning in the school is not accustomed to practicing English in all contexts. Thus, students feel unfamiliar with the English language, especially when listening to the native speakers speaking. The misconceptions of listening make its exposure at school neglected. It gets worse because students themselves seldom practice and the teacher does not facilitate the student with a good teaching technique (Field, 2008). Furthermore, students are rarely assessed by their teacher in terms of listening skills.

The research is intended to investigate Indonesian EFL students' listening performance from their perspective. Knowing how far the students learn listening can be evaluation for listening learning in the classroom. The purpose of study is to discover students' difficulties in doing English listening items. Beside the difficulties, It is important to know that apart from these difficulties, there are factors that cause the difficulties arise while doing the test.

Listening may create severe tension for students. The research by Yilmaz (2015) finds out the frequency of students' problems in listening in three aspects (learner psychology, students, and the teacher). While another research by Balatur (2016) discovers the perceptions of the EFL preparatory school students of their listening skills in English course and its relation between students' belief and their gender, type of school, and listening scores. Also, Darti and Asmawati (2017) in their research find out that the problems encountered by the students in listening skills are not only from the listeners themselves but also from the content material and environment of listening comprehension. However, the current research is different from the previous researches because it focuses on students' difficulties in doing an English listening test through a case study at State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Besides, this study also aims to discover students' perception of the factors affecting their difficulties in English listening test.

## **B. Research Questions**

From the research background, some questions arise over the problem above, that is:

1. What are the students' difficulties in doing English listening test?
2. What are the students' perceptions of the factors affecting students' difficulties in doing English listening test?

### **C. Research Objectives**

Considering the research questions above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To discover the students' difficulties in doing English listening test.
2. To find out the students' perceptions of the factors affecting students' difficulties in doing English listening test.

### **D. Research Significances**

The research significances are divided into two parts, the first is the theoretical aspect. Many sources claimed that the learning of listening comprehension in school is slightly neglected. Thus, the research is expected to be an information source about university students' difficulties in doing English listening test, and it can give a positive contribution to listening teaching and learning process.

The second is the practical aspect. Beside some issues that stated above, the research can be a review for lecture or teacher who teach listening lesson that not all English teaching is taught listening skill, so it is useful for lecture or teacher remapping what will be taught to students. Then, even though students' difficulties were developed and shaped by learning context as they experienced, but students are able to raise awareness to more focus on learning listening items of English subjects. For other researches, this is useful to add an additional source; especially for those studies on students' perspectives of listening skills.

### **E. Research Framework**

Listening is an activity to comprehend what has been heard whether through directly communication, news, music, or film. Listening also knows the messages of the speaker and through listening, language process is comes from. Listening is more than perceiving sounds, knowing language, and having aural processing abilities (Noris et al., (2017); Oxford (1993) as cited in Canaran et al., 2020).

To find out how far students understanding, it can be done using repetition or tests. Tests of listening comprehension attempt to measure the test takers' ability to comprehend and interpret the oral stimuli. In particular, tests for higher-intermediate and advanced levels assess the examinees' understanding of both informal and formal lectures and their comprehension of native speakers in different speech situations (Hemmati and Ghaderi, 2014).

Tersta and Novianti (2017) said that listening is one of the most vital skill among the other skills that claimed by some of the researchers as a fundamental skill that can develop another skill. It is an active process in which we hear the message and transfer it to the brain to be processed and make sense. On the other hand, listening is one skill that EFL students may find difficult to be mastered. Students get difficulties when they need to understand the message in a language they are not familiar with.

Learning difficulty is commonly found in the school. Learning difficulty is caused by various factors. Students are categorized as having learning difficulties if they are unable to perform well in the class but normal in reading, speaking, writing and listening aspects. There are also many more students who have learning difficulties that are not caused by any disability but by environmental, socio-economic, familial, health, motivational and educational factors (Abu-Hamour and Al-Hmouz, 2017).

Listening test at school may create severe tension for students. Students who rarely practice listening skills get shocked and work harder to digest the message. The student needs to get used to hear the native speaker and practice more by improving the listening teaching and learning process to be more productive. A statement of Underwood (2003) as cited in Yilmaz (2015), there are some significant problems in listening comprehension, such as : 1) Students can't concentrate for too long; 2) Students can find out the message, but neither the intended message; 3) Students cannot recognize the vocabularies they know; 4) Students is easy to forget what they have heard; 5) Students is often to ignore the next part while thinking the meaning;

Even though the described problem were related to students factor or process factor, but it can be concluded that students have problem in processing to identify words (word arrangement, construction, etc.) they know, speech speed and it make their concentration a little disturbed. These listening problems have long been ignored and remained unresolved in the conventional teaching of listening, which simply involves practicing answering the listening test question and explaining meaning (Field, 1998; Karami and Bagheri, 2014; Namaziandost et al., 2019)

## **F. Previous Research**

There are several researches relevant to this topic of the paper. A research by Yilmaz (2015) discusses the young learners' problem during learning listening and reveal what kind of difficulty students face by accumulating the result of the frequency problem in three aspects, they are learner psychology, students, and teacher. The Quantitative method approach and quasi-experiment research design are used in this research. The result is that there are some problems in teaching listening, begin from the teaching-learning, the phonetics which students do not usually hear, and it is included the psychological basics of students that have anxiety during listening activity. The difference between this research and the current research is in the participants, if the participants of previous research are young learners, but the participants of current research are university students.

Secondly, research from Namaziandost (2019) investigates listening comprehension problems and strategies used among Iranian advance EFL Learners in a private language institutes of Ahvaz, Iran. Questionnaire is used to collect the data of 60 advance students. The result, one of the major problems they faced while listening is resulting from the unclear pronunciation of words. Other problems such as speech rate, accent of native speakers, the length of text were mentioned in the research result so that students had difficulty to guess unfamiliar words. The different with current research is from

where the research takes place. The previous research took research in a private language institute, and then current research takes the research in a university.

The last, Research from Balatur (2016) discovers the perceptions of the EFL preparatory school students, in the academic year of 2015-2016, of their listening skills in English course and investigate the relationship between students' beliefs and their gender, type of high school attended and their listening scores. The research uses a quantitative method approach. The findings are that students have an unexpectedly high result. Students have their respective problems that categorized in the questionnaire, so that it can't be concluded to be one single factor and taken by a single dimension only. The diversity with this research, the research reveals the relationship of students' beliefs, gender, attendance and scores. The current research reveals the factors why students encounter difficulties when facing the English listening test items.

Beside the differences found in the three studies above, the current research has a uniqueness which is not revealed in the previous researches. The current research digs out the factors affecting university students' difficulties in doing English listening test and discovers students' perception to the factors affecting the difficulties in doing English listening test.



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