

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the basic contents of the research that include background, research questions, research problems, research significances, research framework, and previous researches.

A. Background

This study analyzes the difficulties of English listening comprehension at the level of young learners, including the causes and solutions on each difficulty. This study aims to evaluate students' difficulties in their listening skills and perceive what the teachers need to do to increase their comprehension in English listening activities. Finding the difficulties and solutions at their young age could help them improve their listening skills in their future.

Listening is one of the essential skills that the students need to master to gain success in learning English as their foreign language. Listening comprehension is a fundamental part of the prosperous language program; yet it is known that listener characteristics influence the success of listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Indeed, having a successful listening comprehension supported by a lot of factors and those might become problems for the learners (Yılmaz & Yavuz, 2015).

However, the learning curriculum in Indonesia put vocabulary mastery at the beginning of learning a foreign language before listening. It is contradicted with the psycholinguistics theory that first put the listening before other skills in acquiring a language. It is showed by the children who listen to their parents and the people around them before they can speak a language. However, listening comprehension cannot be required easily by the children because it is coordinated with multiple language and cognitive skills, and it is not a limited material that can be taught in a short time (Y.-S. G. Kim & Pilcher, 2016).

According to Hamouda (2013), many English books and curriculum pay less attention to listening skills because it is concluded as the language acquisition that will improve naturally as the students learning a language. The students of 5th grade in SD Insan Teladan is a group of EFL learners who learn English since 1st grade. It means that they have learned English for more than four years. Nonetheless, they only learn listening skill implicitly such as listening to a song and the teacher's pronunciation on reading a short text. It is appropriate with the learning target in their level yet it is different from listening comprehension that is focused on comprehending the spoken language by extracting and constructing meaning (Y.-S. G. Kim &

Pilcher, 2016). Listening comprehension is the essential skill to help the students in accomplishing language learning because it increases the students' comprehensible input. Since the students have a better listening comprehension skill, they will be more confident and motivated in having access to spoken English such as speech, talking with native speaker, and so on (Ahmadi, 2016). In fact, it is considered as a difficult task that leads to the learners face the difficulties in comprehending the English spoken text (Hamouda, 2013).

To help the students learning English successfully, the teacher should give more practice and find out the students' difficulties in comprehending the English listening material. So, the teacher could figure out the problems while teaching and give the students successful learning since they are young. The most supportive situation of learning a foreign language is known in the age of primary school (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014). Furthermore, Oroji & Ghane (2014) state that young learners have a faster improvement in learning another language than adults do, even they are not being taught the formal rules and principles of the language.

Analyzing the students' difficulties become an interesting topic for this research to assist the teacher in improving the students' listening skill. It examines the number of English listening comprehension difficulties based on research by (Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016); cultural differences, accent, unfamiliar vocabularies, length and speed of the listening material.

There are several pieces of research related to listening. The first research conducted by Yılmaz & Yavuz (2015) find the biggest listening problem seen from the three listening problem categories: problem-based on the teacher, problem-based on students' strategies, and problem-based on learner psychology. Second, research by El-dali (2017) proves whether listening comprehension is a part of language problems or listening problems. The third research is administered by Al Hosni (2014) that finds three factors of young learners' difficulties in improving their speaking skills. Those are linguistic difficulties, mother tongue use, and inhibition.

Nonetheless, the current research is different from the previous researches that focused on students' listening problems based on three categories; (1) problem-based on the teacher, (2) problem-based on students' strategies, and (3) problem-based on learner psychology, the analysis of listening comprehension skill, and the difference between young adult and young learners in learning another language. This research centers the learners' listening difficulties in Indonesia focus on young learners that are considered as a better language learner. This research identifies the categorization of students' listening difficulties based on the research by

Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) that is suitable for the condition of the object of research. Also, this research affirms the causes and solutions for students' difficulties.

B. Research Questions

The problems in the background are formulated in the following questions:

1. What are the English listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners?
2. What are the causes of English listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners?
3. What are the solutions for each listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners?

C. Research Purposes

The questions above indicate the aim of research as the following statements:

1. To examine the English listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners.
2. To analyze the causes of English listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners.
3. To find out the solutions for each listening comprehension difficulties faced by young learners.

D. Research Significances

This research is assumed to assist the teacher in identifying students' difficulties in listening comprehension. The teacher needs to find what the learning difficulties are and the causes. Solutions to the difficulties could then be made.

Practically, this research gives significance to the participants: the teacher and students. The result of this research is assumed to assist the teacher finding the most problematic thing in listening comprehension for students. Also, it can assist the teacher in dealing with students' listening difficulties by knowing the most significant problem, causes, and the solution. So, the teacher could find the proper method of teaching English listening. Moreover, this research also aims to assist the students in expressing the biggest difficulty in their listening comprehension. Also, knowing what they should learn primarily to enhance their listening skill.

Theoretically, this study could give information relates to the students' learning process that focuses on their difficulties in comprehending the listening passages. Also, the causes and solutions of each difficulty in this research can be used as the reference to improve the students' listening skills for the better English language learning process in the future. The theories and result of this research can be used as the example and reference of the future study.

E. Research Framework

There are four basic skills to have a successful learning English: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Listening comprehension is the main part of language acquisition that is supported by the listener (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Most of the literature claims that 40% of the language learners were spent in listening so that the success of teaching and learning language lay on listening (Rahman et al., 2018). However, for EFL learners, listening is often regarded as the most difficult skill to learn. They typically have a limited chance to learn English outside the formal classroom that gives an impact to the learners in having a limited ability in comprehending the English language (El-dali, 2017 : p. 2).

On the other hand, the schools in Indonesia give more priority to teaching structure, writing, reading, and vocabulary in English. Therefore, students have significant problems in listening such as understanding the message of the spoken English text, how they deliver the message, the audience, and environment. Creating a positive atmosphere could minimize problems and increase students' listening comprehension (Bingol et al., 2014).

This study explores the difficulties of English listening comprehension that is classified by Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016). They categorize the difficulties into four matters. Those are cultural differences, accent, unfamiliar vocabularies, length and speed of the audio material.

Learning a foreign language could not be separated from its culture. So, the students can find difficulty in understanding the material including the listening context. Zhipeng (2017) argues that students' cultural background knowledge of the English language could help them in having successful learning, includes their comprehension of the listening phase because the students could understand the context of listening more easily. The study of culture indirectly takes the important part in listening because it could be their problems and things they need to be dealt with in comprehending listening materials.

Second, the English language has various accents in pronouncing the words. The students might find it difficult when the words they used to hear are differently pronounced in the audio of listening materials. Familiarity with the accent is a possible factor that could influence the extent of understanding listening audio. Thus, listening practices with only one accent is not adequate in increasing students' listening comprehension skill because they might find other English accent varieties in the real world and other chance of English listening practice that becomes the problem to them (Matsuura, 2017).

Meanwhile, vocabulary mastery also has an important part in comprehending listening to audio material. The students with more vocabulary mastery could understand the listening passage more easily because a higher vocabulary mastery level indicates a greater positive

aspect of listening (Cheng, 2018). So, when the vocabularies delivered in the audio are unfamiliar for the students, it will become one of their listening difficulties.

In listening practice, the listeners could not control the speed of the spoken material in the audio. It could be another serious listening comprehension difficulties for second language learners (Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Listening to the passage for more than three minutes and completing the following task is difficult for lower-level students (Bingol et al., 2014). The speech rate and length of the spoken material should be appropriate with the students' level language learning, especially in their listening skill comprehension to have a successful English listening comprehension improvement.

There are several kinds of difficulties faced by students. The difficulties influenced by the factors of listening comprehension that support successful English language learning. Asriati (2017) finds 25 factors affect the students' listening comprehension that is elaborated into 4 aspects such as the linguistics aspects of the students, lack of concentration factor, listener factor, and speaker factor. Those factors cause difficulties for the students in comprehending the listening passage. However, there are strategies to deal with their difficulties such as activating the students' prior knowledge, introducing the different native-speaker accents, activating the students' vocabulary, using various methods of input, and many others (Saraswaty, 2018a).



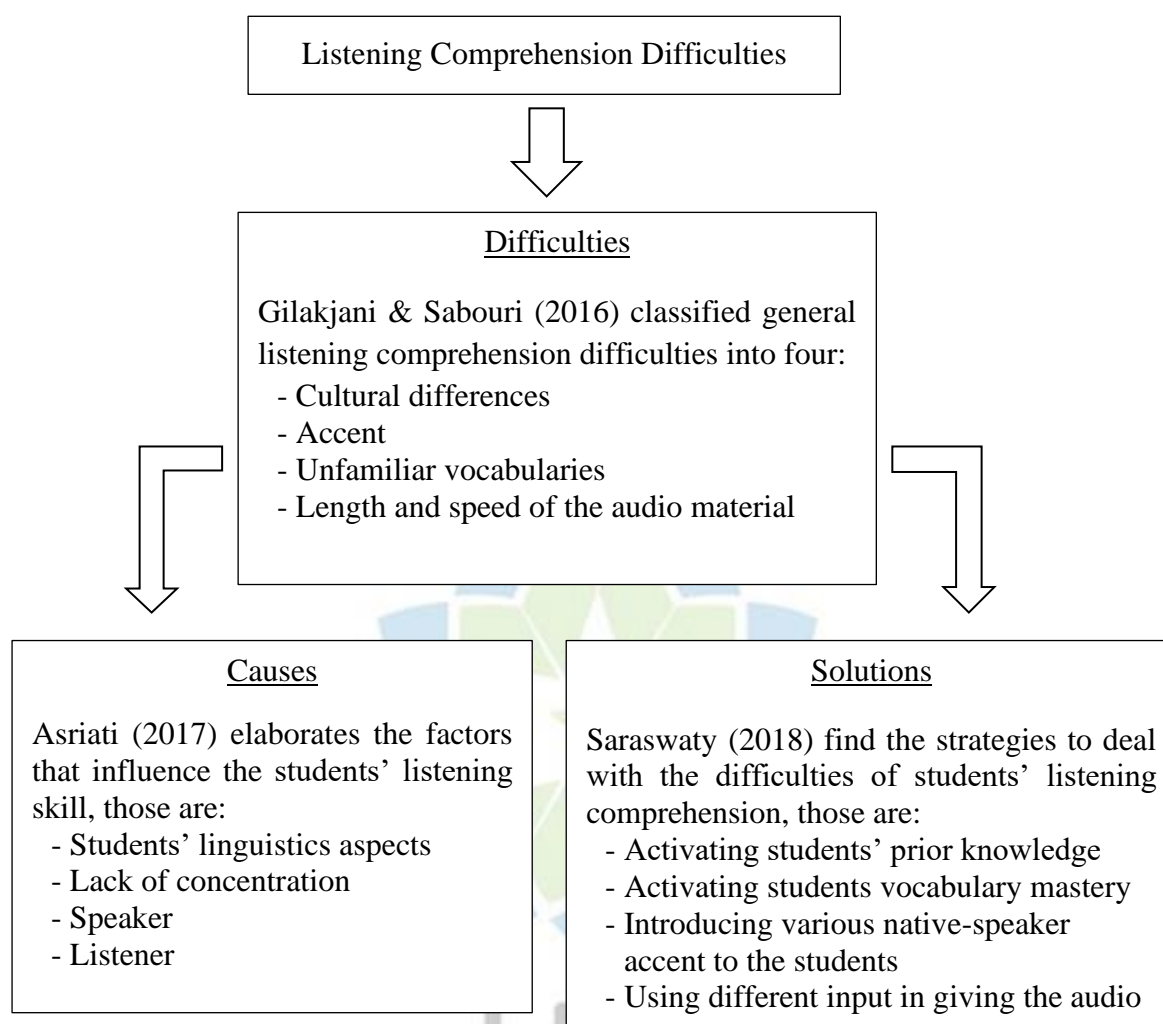


Figure 0.1 The relation among categorizations, causes, and solutions of students' listening comprehension

F. Previous Studies

There are several previous researches related to listening. The first research is conducted by Yılmaz & Yavuz (2015) who prove the biggest listening problem seen from the three listening problem categories: based on the teacher, based on students' strategies, and based on learner psychology. They use a qualitative design with a questionnaire as the instrument in gathering the data. The data are taken from three different groups to find a reliable result of the study. The result of the research is that the most problematic thing in English listening comprehension of fourth-grade students in Turkish Primary School, Istanbul is teaching and learning phonetically that focus on problems based on the teacher. It includes a solution based on the researchers' view to solve the problems found.

Second, a research that is conducted by Wang and Cha (2019) investigates the effects of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) factors in different listening proficiency levels. There are 78 students majoring English in a Chinese university, including the low and high- proficient EFL learners, who participate in this research. They should complete two tasks those are a questionnaire of Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scales (FLLAS) and a listening test. It aims to examine the different effect of FLLA factors such as listening-anxiety, self-belief, and decoding-skills on listening performance. The result shows that both groups of low and high-proficient level, do not have any differences in overall FLLA. Still, they have significant differences in their self-belief in listening comprehension ability such as the low-proficient listeners who get more anxious and less confident that affect to their listening proficiency. Additionally, the results prove that the listening-anxiety is negatively impact the low-proficient students in their listening ability. Meanwhile, the lack of self-belief is considered as the positive factor to their listening proficiency. Nevertheless, the listening performance of both of groups is not highly affected by the factor of decoding skills.

The third research is administered by Asriati (2017) that identifies the students' listening comprehension factors using a descriptive quantitative method. There are 400 students participated as the population and 35 students as the sample. They are given a questionnaire as the instrument of the research which consists of 25 items related to the factors affected students' listening achievement. The result shows that there are 11 of 25 items considered as the most dominating factors which are elaborated into four, those are the linguistics aspect of the students, lack of concentration factors, listener factors, and speaker factors.

Another research is applied by Al Hosni (2014) that reveals the difficulties of young learners in improving their speaking skills. It is registered as a case study with three instruments in collecting the data, those are class observation, interviews, and curriculum analysis. The interview is applied to the teachers and students of 5th grade to find their beliefs toward speaking difficulties. As a result, this research finds that speaking difficulties encountered by young learners are caused by three factors, those are linguistic difficulties, mother tongue use, and inhibition.

Research by Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) states several sub-topics related to listening comprehension. They conduct a literature review in the term of listening, listening comprehension, listening comprehension strategies, and listening difficulties. Listening comprehension has three strategies; those are cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. On the other hand, they discover five major problems of listening

comprehension encountered by language learners such as the quality of recorded material, cultural differences, accent, unfamiliar vocabulary, and length and speed of listening audio.

The current research is different from the previous researches that focused on students' listening problems based on three main aspects, listening comprehension that comes from listening problems, the factors that caused students' listening comprehension difficulties, the factors of young learners' difficulties in their speaking ability, and five major problems of listening comprehension that is reviewed from related literatures. Otherwise, this research centers on young learners, especially their listening comprehension skills. This research identifies the categorization of students' listening difficulties based on the research by Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) that is suitable for the condition of the object of research. Also, this research affirms the cause and solution for each difficulty.

The relation between the previous researches and the current research can be seen clearly from the diagram below:

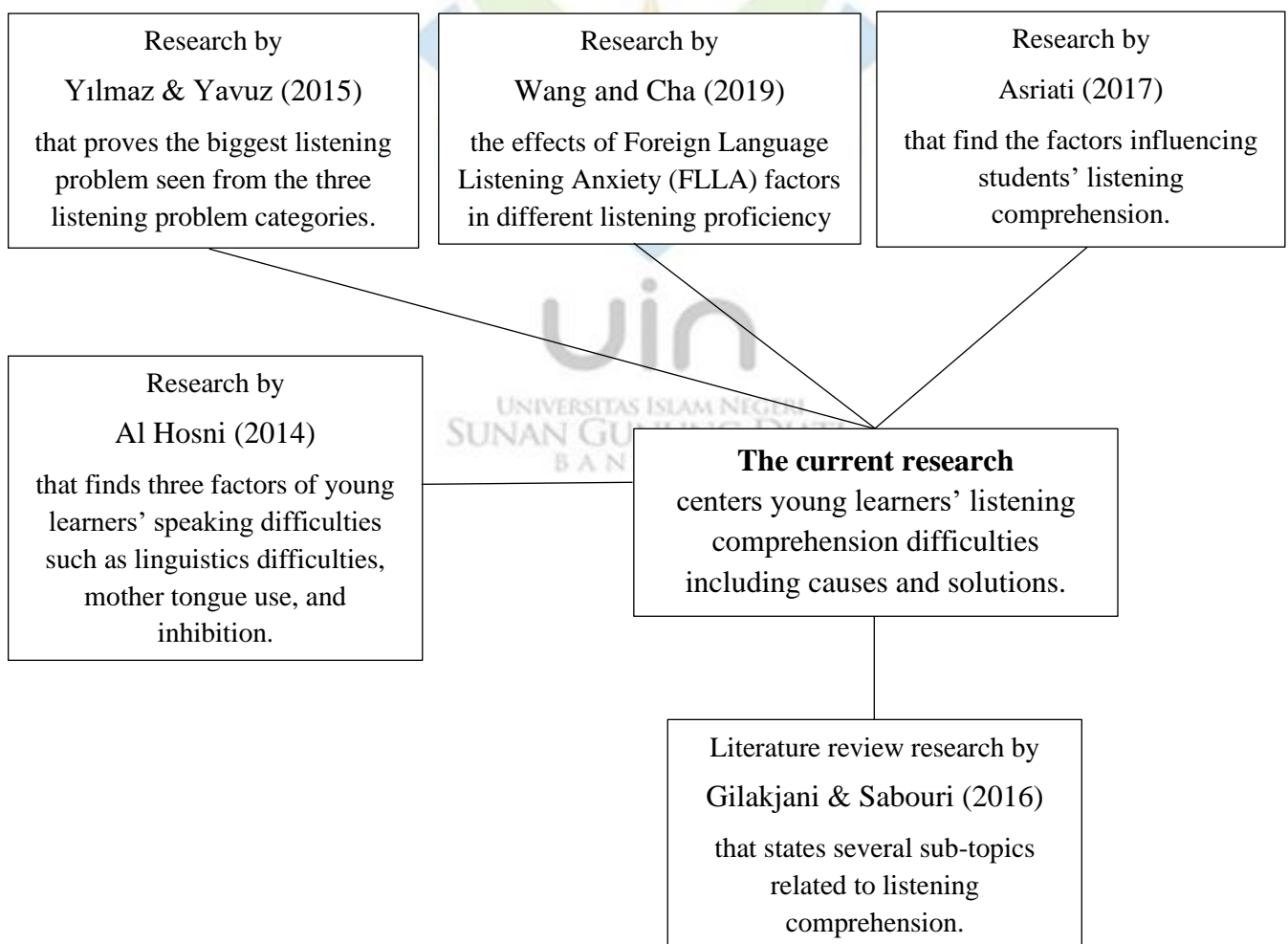


Figure 0.2 The gaps between the previous research and current research