

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The introduction part of the research presents and elaborates six parts that consist of the background of the study, research questions, research purposes, research significances, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and previous studies.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

This study examines the correlation between students' mastery of English vocabulary and their listening comprehension which is represented at TOEFA score. TOEFA (Test of English for Academic) is one of the measurement tools for students' English proficiency. It was initially developed by Language Centre of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. TOEFA is a computer-based test used to test English proficiency for non-native speakers in an academic context. There are three skills tested on this test, including listening skill, structure and written expression, also reading and vocabulary. Listening is one of the skills that students have to master to get both a good score at TOEFA and a good understanding of their communication with others.

Listening is one of the successful factors in everyday communication. Referring to Yurko & Styfanyshyn (2020), listening is the most frequently used language skills compared to other language skills in daily life. On average, people can assume that listening twice as much when they speak, four times as much when they read, and five times as much when they write. Further, Mendelsohn (1994, p. 9) states that listening comprehension is a crucial element in communication. From the total time spent in communication, listening takes out 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, around 9%. It shows that listening is the most used ability in diurnal life. Therefore, students will never learn to communicate effectively without previously acquiring listening skills.

However, in the EFL learning process, listening is considered the hardest language skill for students because they frequently face some difficulties such as unknown vocabulary, different or unfamiliar accents, fast speech rate, or lacking

concentration (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Put it in another word, listening is an intricate process where a lot of things happen synchronously in mind. It was evident in a preliminary study on 7<sup>th</sup>-semester students of the English Education Department, Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. From 70 students who filled out the questionnaire, most of them still found it difficult in their listening comprehension. There are several factors which makes students hard in it, those are: the lack of grammar mastery, the lack of pronunciation mastery, the lack of concentration, and the lack of vocabulary mastery. Nevertheless, most of students implement the lack of vocabulary mastery as the major factor in their listening comprehension problems. Hence, from this limited observation, the researcher determines that some students still have difficulty in listening comprehension, and one of the main causal factors is the lack of vocabulary. This result aligns with the result of a study by Sah & Shah (2020) where from 25 English teachers in five different schools, most of them (65.4%) strongly agree that the main difficulty for students in listening arises from lack of their vocabulary.

Vocabulary is one of the main factors that help students get the point of what the speaker says. Supported by Stæhr (2009), students who know more vocabulary are generally more successful at understanding spoken language. Such argument is reinforced by Xin & Harncharnchai (2020), who said that vocabulary is generally known as the fundamental tool for communication. The language used by users in conveying their ideas, opinions, and feelings, which are the manifestation of human thoughts, is vocabulary. Consequently, vocabulary becomes a centre of language, especially for listening.

A study related to this topic conducted by Afshari and Tavakoli (2016) which revealed that a positive relation seems between the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension. The study took 32 Iranian EFL students at high-intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency which includes high-school and university students, as the participants. The instruments were using Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) for vocabulary and TOEFL for listening

comprehension test. Meanwhile, Ataş (2018) showed that a medium relation appeared between vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension of advanced EFL students. The research participants were 33 Turkish EFL students at the advanced level. The instruments were using Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) and a standard listening test from the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). However, the current research is different from the previous. The previous studies conducted research with foreign language learners as the participants and used TOEFL and CPE for the instrument of listening comprehension test. In the meantime, this research will be conducted with Indonesian students with heterogeneous English level (elementary, intermediate, and upper intermediate) as the participants and using document analysis of students' TOEFA score as the instrument for measuring students' listening comprehension level.

From the background above, it is interesting to conduct further research about correlation between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension as represented at TOEFA score. That is to say, finding out the correlation between vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension is essential. Furthermore, the research can be used as an evaluation or consideration for improving students' listening ability and teachers' strategy in teaching vocabulary or listening.

## **B. Research Questions**

Based on the background above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the students' current English vocabulary mastery as represented at their Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) score?
2. What is the students' listening comprehension as represented at their TOEFA score?
3. What is the correlation between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension?

### **C. Research Purposes**

According to the research questions above, the objectives of this research are below:

1. To describe the students' current English vocabulary mastery.
2. To describe the level of students' listening comprehension.
3. To examine the correlation level between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension.

### **D. Research Significances**

This research purposes to provide a significant contribution to any parties both theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretical significance

This research aims to be useful for increasing students' English vocabulary mastery and providing information about the relationship between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension.

2. Practical significance

This research aims to help students to recognize their English vocabulary mastery and listening comprehension ability, so they can improve those skill and get good listening comprehension. Then, this study is expected to be able to redound to all teachers or lecturers to consider their students' English vocabulary mastery and specify the best strategy in the learning and teaching process to reduce student gaps and maximize their potency in studying English, mainly in listening comprehension.

### **E. Conceptual Framework**

Vocabulary is pivotal in English learning. Without mastering vocabulary, students cannot grasp what other people say or convey their own ideas. Mastering vocabulary is required for students. They will learn English more easily when

having a lot of vocabulary. As stated by Stæhr (2009), students who know more vocabulary are generally more successful at understanding spoken language. However, each student has a different vocabulary mastery level. Hence, to investigate their vocabulary mastery level, some instruments are needed. Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) is one of the best types of test to measure vocabulary mastery level (Enayat & Amirian, 2016).

The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) is the most popular standardized vocabulary test currently available (Meara, 1994, 1996 cited in Kremmel & Schmitt, 2017). It is a validated and reliable test, which aims to measure either language learners' receptive or productive vocabulary knowledge (Nizonkiza, 2016). Receptive vocabulary knowledge is acquired through reading and listening processes, while productive vocabulary occurs when performing in writing or speaking (AbManan et al., 2017). Thus, the VLT can indicate at which frequency level students have mastered vocabulary.

Furthermore, the new version of VLT administers a test of five different levels including, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4.000, and 5000 English words (Webb et al., 2017). The ratio of different word classes is maintained in the test of each level. The ratio is three clusters of noun, two clusters of verb, and one cluster of adjective (Kremmel & Schmitt, 2017). Each section on VLT consists of 30 questions in a multiple matching format. Three items are taken to represent 100 words of any frequency band. The items are presented in 10 groups consisting of six words (three keys and three distractors) and three definitions at each level (Webb et al., 2017). The test taker's task is to match the correct item number to the appropriate definition. Accordingly, on the test, the learners are asked to recognize the word from its form and not its meaning, therefore the choices are the words and not the definitions.

Besides, after learning and mastering the vocabulary, students can link it to other primary English skills. Vocabulary mastery plays a significant part in the four language skills (Alqahtani, 2015). One of the language skills that students must master and need vocabulary mastery is listening. Listening is the most regularly used language ability in daily life (Yurko et al., 2020). People are always involved

in interactions in their everyday life, and they need mastery of listening skill for effective communication.

However, to get effective communication, students have to comprehend what the speaker says. This ability is called listening comprehension. Listening comprehension is a complex process in which students need to use their knowledge of the language (i.e. vocabulary, sound, and grammar) and background knowledge to understand what is being spoken (Tran & Duong, 2020). In listening, students are required to give more attention and focus to understand the meaning that is delivered because some of the problems that are usually faced by listeners are lack of concentration and fast speaking speed. Yet, regarding several factors that influence listening, vocabulary becomes the most crucial. Vocabulary is considered to have a significant point to a high correlation with listening comprehension (Teng, 2016).

Therefore, in this case, this research attempts to investigate the correlation between the level of students' vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension. The research used two kinds of variables. The first is the correlation between the level students' vocabulary mastery as the "X" variable, which is the independent variable, and the second is students' listening comprehension text as the "Y" variable, which is the dependent variable.

## **F. Hypothesis**

Hypothesis refers to the researcher's prediction about the expected relationships between variables (Creswell, 2012). The hypothesis is obtained from the data collected from the sample. The hypotheses are below:

1.  $H_0$ : There is no significant correlation between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension.
2.  $H_a$ : There is a significant correlation between students' English vocabulary mastery and their listening comprehension.



## **G. Previous Studies**

There are some studies related to this topic. First, research conducted by Afshari and Tavakoli (2016) analysed the correlation between the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension. The research involved 32 male EFL learners at high-intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency in Khoy City. The instruments used to collect the data are Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) to measure students' breadth vocabulary, Word Association Test (WAT) to measure students' depth vocabulary, and TOEFL to measure students' listening comprehension. The result showed that a positive relationship appeared between the two independent variables (depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge) and listening comprehension. Then, research by Dabbagh (2016) investigated the predictive role of depth versus breadth of vocabulary knowledge in L2 learners' listening comprehension. The participants were 73 intermediate Iranian undergraduate EFL learners. For the instruments, the research used Oxford Quick Placement Test (OPT), Word Association Test (WAT), Vocabulary Level Test (VLT), and IELTS listening sub-test. The result revealed that only vocabulary depth could significantly predict L2 learners' listening comprehension, while vocabulary breadth did not have such a predictive power. Next, a study by Farvardin and Valipouri (2017) identified the relationship between vocabulary size and listening comprehension to lower-intermediate level EFL learners in Iran. The instruments are Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) and Word Association Test (WAT) to measure the vocabulary level and TOEFL for listening comprehension. The result revealed that the relationship between vocabulary size and listening comprehension was elevated and significant. The other study conducted by Ataş (2018) examined the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension of advanced EFL learners. The research used the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) for measuring the vocabulary knowledge and the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) for the listening test. The result showed that a moderate correlation seems between vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension.

Furthermore, this research is different from the previous. The previous studies administered the test for lower-intermediate Iranian students (Farvardin & Valipouri, 2017), intermediate Iranian students (Dabbagh, 2016), high-intermediate and advanced Iranian students (Afshari & Tavakoli, 2016), and advanced Turkish students (Ataş, 2018), then using TOEFL, IELTS, and CPE as the instrument for listening test. While this research focuses on Indonesian students with heterogeneous English proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and upper intermediate) and use a document analysis of students' listening TOEFA score as the instrument to find out the data of students' listening comprehension level.

