

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the main content of this research, including the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, research limitation, rationale, and previous research. Listening is one of the important skills that should be mastered by English Education students. Therefore, students may use various strategies to improve their listening skills.

A. Background

Listening plays a crucial role in the communication area. As Mendelsohn (1994) once stated, the total time on communicating most spent by listening which takes up 40-50% while other skills; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%. In English classroom, having a good ability in listening skills help the students to understand what the lecturer says and comprehend it with the prior knowledge they have. Sometimes, when listening to a word or phrase, the word stress influences to give a different meaning of the word. Thus, the students need to know and listen carefully to what is being said so that they can get the right meaning and have a connected communication in the class. The better students' English listening skills, the better understanding they get about learning material that occurs in the English class because the fundamental skill in language learning is listening, and more than 50% of the time students spend working in a foreign language is dedicated to listening (Nunan, 1998).

Moreover, to have a good ability in listening is not that easy for some students. Although listening skills seem to be the most frequently used by the students in the class, many of them still find it difficult, thus, they need to learn and practice listening continuously. Some researchers believe that sufficient use of language learning strategies contributes to better L2 skills (Porte, 1988; Vann & Abraham, 1990). The research conducted by Park (1997) indicated the relationship between language learning strategies and L2 proficiency was linear, the TOEFL test scores demonstrate the significance of the use of strategies in L2 skills, the more students

use language learning strategies, the higher their TOEFL score. In other words, the use of learning strategies makes the students successful in their language learning.

Many scholars have discussed about language learning strategies from different perspectives, Brown, J. S., & VanLehn, K. (1980) offered a simple description, that learning strategies as mechanisms that can directly lead to learning. Oxford (1990) describes learning strategies as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to a new situation”. In other words, learning strategies are related to tactics and techniques used in the process of learning, especially in the learning of a language. O’Malley (1985) divided language learning strategies into three main subcategories: Metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. Oxford (1990) sees the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. Oxford divides language learning into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into six groups (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies).

Furthermore, the writer aims to research what strategies the students of English Education used in improving their listening skills through this study. Although listening skills become the most challenging skill to master, especially for students who live in a non-speaking English country, many of them are still interested to face the challenge as they want to understand and master English like a native does, by using learning strategies. Willing (1988) points out that learning requires assimilation and language strategies are defined as any means that students use to convert external information into internal and personal resources and skills. On the other hand, learning a language also requires a suitable method that is acceptable for learners to achieve their goals.

As mentioned above, research by Park (1997) found that students’ learning strategies give good progress to the students’ English skills. Lau (2017) stated that although there are different strategies used by high and low students, they all agreed their listening becomes better by using strategies. Based on the researchers above, strategies gave a good impact on language learners in improving their language

ability especially in listening. Ghani (2003) has studied the idea of students using learning strategies. She found that to learn a foreign language, different students adopt various behaviors or techniques. Learners used the strategies based on their preferred style that is beneficial for them.

According to the preliminary data, the writer collected from 16 students of English Education Department, the students took TOEFA (Test of English for Academic) twice, in the 1st and 3rd semester. The result of the TOEFA test in the 1st semester is low because the students claimed that they were confused about what they hear while doing the test and they can not answer it correctly. In the second TOEFA test which is in the 5th semester, their TOEFA score showed improvement. Thus, this study aims to observe what are learning strategies they used to improve their listening skill and why do they use those strategies.

B. Research Questions

There are some research questions regarding the problem of the study

1. What are the language learning strategies that the students use to improve their listening skills?
2. Why do the students use those strategies to improve their listening skills?

C. Research Purposes

Regarding the problem, this study aims:

1. To find the language learning strategies that the students use to improve their listening skills.
2. To find the reason the students use those strategies to improve their listening skills.

D. Research Significances

Theoretically, this study is expected to become a source of information about the way English learners improve their listening to their style and to give some ideas and understanding to the English teacher about the strategies to be implemented in the classroom. Practically, this research provides significances to:

1. Teacher

The result of this study is expected to help English teachers to acknowledge the kinds of strategies students used to improve their listening skills and as a consideration to teach the students those strategies or when making learning material related to listening.

2. Future researcher

The result of this study is expected to help future researchers to get more information about learning listening strategies and their relation to students' achievement. Furthermore, to analyze the different contexts of language learning strategies.

E. Research Limitation

This study aims to explore the learning strategies used by English Education Department students to improve their listening skills. To limit the study, strategies are defined based on the categories provided by Oxford (1990) theory: which are memory strategies; cognitive strategies; compensation strategies; metacognitive strategies; affective strategies; and social strategies. The results of this study are objective with the research participant only, however, the results could be an account for further research and teaching.

F. Rationale

In mastering language, listening becomes one of the most fundamental pieces of learning and teaching English. Barbe & Myers (1954) defined listening as the process of reacting to, interpreting, and relating to spoken language in terms of experience and further course of action. This definition in line with the term communication, that listening plays an important role in communication. Mendelson (2000) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) illustrate the total time spent on communicating, listening takes 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing about 9%. It means the learners need to practice listening language, reading language, speaking language, and writing language to develop their experience and skills (Ybarra & Green, 2003).

However, listening is not easy for some people especially those who live in a country that uses English as a foreign language. They are not familiar with the pronunciation, words, or speech pattern itself. A lot of beginning English learners are difficult to listen to and to understand English from the native speaker because it requires them to make meaning from the oral input by drawing upon their background knowledge of the world and the foreign language. In other words, listening is a complex active process of interpretation in which listeners try to suit what they hear with their prior knowledge (Vandergrift, 2003). Richards (1983) mentioned, that it is more complex for foreign language learners who have limited memory capacity of the target language.

Thus, learners need a suitable learning strategy. Learning strategies refer to thoughtful procedures used by learners to develop comprehension, learning, and retaining of the target language (O'malley & Chamot, 1990). Strategies help learners develop understanding, retaining, and recalling of information; and, at the same time, they support them in planning for overall listening development as part of their language learning effort (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Ellis (1994) points out a strategy, which consists of mental or behavioral activity, relates to some specific stages in the overall process of language acquisition or language use. Moreover, Ghani (2003) gives a new dimension to the definition of the learning strategies describing them as a facilitator in a successful learning process. She stated that learning strategies are procedures, employed by the learners; to make their language as successful as possible.

Language learning strategies vary widely and they are divided into distinct categories. O'malley et al. (1990), described language learning strategies in more detail. They classify the strategies under three main headings: cognitive (applying a specific technique to a particular task, for example repeating, reasoning, and analyzing), metacognitive (related to the learning process. For example organizing, planning, and monitoring), and socio-affective (involving oneself and others, for example co-operating with peers and seeking clarification).

Going beyond O'malley & Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990) also classified language learning strategies, she divided these strategies into two major groups,

they are direct strategies and indirect strategies, then each group has three more categories (metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies are included to indirect strategies. While cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, and memory strategies are direct strategies). It was argued that many different strategies can be used by language learners:

- a. Metacognitive strategies are employed for managing the learning process overall. Purpura (1997) cited in Oxford (2003) found that metacognitive strategies had “a significant, positive, direct effect on cognitive strategy use, providing clear evidence that metacognitive strategy use has an executive function over cognitive strategy use in task completion”.
- b. Affective strategies, such as identifying one’s mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk, are significantly related to L2 proficiency in research by Dreyer & Oxford (1996) among South African EFL learners and by Oxford & Ehrman (1995) among native English speaker learning foreign languages.
- c. Social strategies help the learners work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language, such as asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms. In a study by (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996), social strategies were significantly associated with L2 proficiency in studies by the South African EFL and Oxford & Ehrman (1995), the investigation of native-English-speaking foreign language learners.
- d. Cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing schemata for analyzing and classifying it. Cognitive strategies were significantly related to EFL studies by Ku (1995) in Taiwan, R L Oxford et al.(1998) in Turkey, and Park (1994) in Korea.
- e. Memory strategies help the learners link one FL item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Memory strategies have been shown to relate to L2 proficiency in a course devoted

to memorizing large numbers of Kanji characters (Kato, 1996) and in L2 courses designed for native-English speaking learners of foreign languages (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995).

- f. Compensatory strategies help the make guessing from the context in listening and reading. However, Oxford (1990; 1999) contend that compensation strategies of any kind, even though they might be used for language use, nevertheless aid in language learning as well.

G. Previous Research

Therefore, there are some previous studies regarding listening strategies research. First, Hadi et al. (2016) aim to find out listening strategies used by English department students and the strategies used by the higher and the lower score students in the State University of Padang. This research used descriptive research as the design with the population were second-year students. The result of this study indicated that the most frequently used strategy by the students was metacognitive and the least was memory strategies. Meanwhile, the students with higher scores use the metacognitive strategy with high intensity and the students with lower scores use the metacognitive strategy with medium intensity. The difference between both students' category was the intensity of the strategy used.

Second, research by Lau (2017) from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong did the research that aims to find what strategy use, listening problems, and motivation between the high and low proficiency listeners in a native language (L1). The study used very large participants, about 1,290 grade 7 and 1,515 grade 9, and use qualitative and quantitative methods, including listening tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The result of this study portrays that the high listening students are more effective using many types of strategy and pay more awareness on listening problems than the low listening students. However, both high listening students and low listening students are agreed about the importance of listening but have a little in doing the listening test.

Third, the study by Indrianty & Kemala (2017) was conducted a research at *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Pariwisata (STIEPAR)* Language Center, investigate the strategies which are used by the students and the role of Students Language Center (SLC). The participants of this study are 30 first-year students who join the SLC club which was held once a week. This study used observation, interview, and questionnaire to collect the data. From 30 students, only ten students who were chosen as respondents for the interview in term of level of achievement. Furthermore, the questionnaire use open-ended questions to see how SLC influenced their listening ability. Moreover, the questionnaire also used adopted SIIL by Oxford (1990) and MALQ developed by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2013) to find out their strategies. The results indicate that the role of language laboratory, which is avoiding fear, has a big impact to improve their listening skill, also, the metacognitive strategy was found as the most preferred learning strategy among the students.

Last, Kök (2018) also conducted another study about the relationship between listening comprehension strategy and listening comprehension proficiency of English Language teaching students at Izmir University, Turkey. The researcher took the participants who will be the English Teachers which they are not only learning English to use but also to teach how to learn English. The result of this study showed a positive correlation between listening comprehension and the different strategies the students used. The low proficient learners used mental translation strategy while the proficient learners are avoiding it and use metacognitive as their strategy in listening. The researcher also mentions that the learners in Turkey prefer (not always) the traditional, analytical ways of elaborate sentences and ways to find the meaning of everything they hear or read in English to the Turkish equivalent as their mother tongue language.

This research has the same focus as other studies by Hadi et al. (2016); Indrianty & Kemala (2017); Kök (2018); Lau (2017) which listening strategies. However, this research has a different methodology. While research by Kök (2018) used a quantitative method and Lau (2017) used mixed-method research, this research uses qualitative research and a case study at UIN Bandung. Besides,

this study will conduct in the fifth semester of English Education students and had not been investigated among EED UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung before.

