

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Teacher is one of many factors influence the successful of teaching learning process. Teachers or lecturers play the most important role in teaching learning process; they can lead meaningful English learning classroom activities if they are able to overcome or minimize the problem faced by their students. Especially in the English language teaching, teachers' main duty is to direct their students in mastering the macro language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nguyen, 2022).

Listening skills are one of the language skills that students often consider the most challenging. One of the main reasons is that these skills require processing information in real time. According to Rost (2011), "Listening involves an active process of decoding and interpreting oral input" which means that listeners must capture, understand and interpret information directly without the opportunity to repeat or recheck as in reading skills. In addition, in listening situations, there are often distractions or noise that can interfere with concentration and understanding. Brown and Yule (1983) added that "the listener has to cope with the speaker's accent, speed of delivery, and intonation patterns," which can make comprehension difficult for unfamiliar listeners. Compared to speaking, reading and writing skills which allow students to think before responding or producing language, listening

skills require quick and precise comprehension, so they often require more intensive and specific practice to be mastered effectively.

According to Nguyen (2020), listening comprehension is a complex process in which listeners play an active role in discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation and stress, and finally, making use of all the skills mentioned above, interpreting the utterance within the socio-cultural context. Listening skills are anything but easy to master. For many EFL learners, listening is the thing they feel most frustrated with. On the one hand, they cannot control the speed of speech and they tend to have difficulties decoding sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue. Reduced English sounds (lazy speech) or contractions are two examples. On the other hand, even when they hear sounds correctly, usually they have interpretation problems due to a lack of vocabulary. English slang or colloquial language increases the difficulty of interpretation. For EFL learners in Banda Aceh, there is another problem. Since listening does not receive as much attention as reading and writing, students always recognize a word by sight instead of by sound. They may have no interpretation problem when they look at the target word; however, when they are asked to decipher the word through sound, problems emerge.

The writer is desired to conduct a listening-related research after directly observed teaching learning process in SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. She found that ineffective teaching-learning process occurred in which only a small portion of listening parts were taught to students. The teachers mostly teach the other skills excluding listening. They said that listening is the most difficult part for students in

learning English. The writer is desired to conduct a listening-related research after directly observing the teaching-learning process in SMKN 1 Banda Aceh. She found that an ineffective teaching-learning process occurred in which only a small portion of listening parts were taught to students. The teachers mostly teach the other skills excluding listening. They said that listening is the most difficult part for students in learning English." This observation is supported by research that highlights the challenges of teaching listening skills in the classroom. Field (2008) notes that listening is often neglected in language classrooms because it is perceived as a passive skill, and teachers may not feel confident in teaching it effectively. Furthermore, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) emphasize that "listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know," making it a challenging skill to develop without targeted and consistent practice. Studies also show that many students struggle with listening comprehension due to factors such as different accents, speech rates, and lack of contextual cues (Goh, 2000). These findings align with the writer's observations, indicating a broader issue in the teaching and learning of listening skills.

SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is one of high schools that has those problem mentioned. This school will be the research place based on the considerations that it has problem in teaching listening and it has easy access for the writer to get research permit. Another consideration is the school is located in Banda Aceh which is considered as developed area of Banda Aceh city. Most of schools in Banda Aceh have better facilities than schools in rural areas. However, this high school has the small portion of teaching listening.

In spite of its importance, listening has long been neglected skill in foreign language acquisition, research, teaching and assessment. There has been few researches on the listening problems that foreign language learners experience in learning to listen to a spoken English in the classrooms. The result of a research entitled *An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Problems Encountered by Students in the EL Listening Classroom* shown that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL learners (Hamouda, 2013).

Similarly, Ahsaniah (2012) conducted the research at MAN Negara in Bali. Her result of research reported that the students were lack of vocabulary, so they had difficulty to understand the recording in listening section. The result of the research shown that students' difficulties in learning listening at the eleventh grade of MAN academic year 2011/2012 are the students had difficulty to discriminate voiced and voiceless and minimal pair sounds in phoneme discrimination test, they were also lack of vocabulary. Thus, they had difficulty to understand short dialogue by answering multiple choice items. The students did not understand the grammar that used in the text and they had common mistakes in spelling in filling in the blank question.

The difficulties faced by students in learning listening skills at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh are significant and warrant further investigation. During the direct observation of the teaching-learning process, it was evident that listening activities were minimal and often overshadowed by other language skills such as reading,

writing, and speaking. This imbalance is a concern because listening is a foundational skill that supports the development of the other language skills. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), "listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know," making it essential for overall language proficiency. Furthermore, the challenges faced by students, such as difficulty understanding different accents, varying speech rates, and limited exposure to authentic listening materials, align with findings by Goh (2000), who identified similar obstacles in listening comprehension. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that many teachers feel less confident in teaching listening compared to other skills, as noted by Field (2008). Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the effectiveness of the English language learning process at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh and ensuring that students develop a balanced set of language skills.

From this reality, the writer assumed that it is urgent to investigate the reasons of listening being the most difficult part for students in order to find out its solution. Therefore, a research under the title **“An Analysis of Students’ Difficulties in Learning Listening (A Study at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh)”** will be conducted. The writer aims to examine the difficulties faced by students in learning listening. The writer used descriptive-qualitative research, conducted an interview to obtain significant information regarding this research process

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background and the problem of study above, the research question in this thesis is “What are the difficulties faced by students in learning listening skill at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh”?

1.3 Aims of Study

This research is aimed to find out the difficulties that mostly faced by students in learning listening at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh.

1.4 Significance of Study

1. Theoretically

The study will enrich the information about the problems commonly encountered in teaching and learning, especially in learning listening for foreign language learners. By identifying specific challenges and their underlying causes, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in developing listening skills. This, in turn, can inform the development of more effective teaching strategies and curricular adjustments, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of language education. Additionally, the study can serve as a reference for future research in the field of second language acquisition, particularly in the context of listening comprehension.

2. Practically

- a) Understanding students' learning difficulties may enable EFL teachers to help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately will improve their English listening abilities. This process involves tailoring teaching methods to address specific challenges identified in students' listening comprehension, such as difficulties with accents, speech speed, and understanding contextual cues. By implementing targeted interventions and providing consistent practice opportunities, teachers can empower students to overcome these obstacles and enhance their overall language proficiency
- b) It will be useful for students to inform them about the problems they usually face in listening. By understanding these challenges, students can adopt proactive learning strategies and seek additional support to improve their listening skills. This awareness empowers students to actively engage in their learning process, identify areas for improvement, and collaborate more effectively with teachers to address specific difficulties.
- c) The result of this study may also be useful for those who are interested in this field. Researchers, educators, and curriculum developers can benefit from the findings to enhance teaching methods and materials that specifically target listening skills in English language education. This study contributes to the broader knowledge base on effective

language learning strategies and can guide future research endeavors aimed at improving listening comprehension among language learners

1.5 Operational Definition

1. Students' Difficulties in Learning Listening

Students' difficulties in learning listening refer to the specific obstacles and challenges faced by students at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh when trying to develop and improve their English listening skills. These difficulties can be both linguistic and non-linguistic.

2. Linguistic Difficulties

- a) **Understanding Different Accents:** Students often struggle to understand various English accents, which can differ significantly from their teacher's accent (Goh, 2002).
- b) **Fast Speech Rates:** Rapid speech can make it difficult for students to catch all the words and phrases (Underwood, 1989).
- c) **Unfamiliar Vocabulary:** A limited vocabulary can hinder comprehension of listening passages (Hardiyanto et al., 2021).
- d) **Complex Sentence Structures:** Intricate syntax and long sentences can be challenging to process (Vandergrift, 2007).

3. Non-Linguistic Difficulties

- a) **Psychological Factors:** Anxiety and lack of confidence can negatively impact listening comprehension (Field, 2008).

- b) Environmental Factors: Poor recording quality or background noise can disrupt understanding (Karlik, 2023). These difficulties are identified through questionnaires, interviews, and observations during the listening learning process.

4. Listening Skills

"Listening skills" in the context of this research refer to the ability of students to effectively receive, understand, and interpret spoken information in English. These skills involve several aspects, including:

- a) Auditory Discrimination: The ability to distinguish between different sounds, phonemes, and intonations in English (Buck, 2001).
- b) Grammar and Vocabulary Comprehension: Understanding grammatical structures and meanings of words and phrases used in spoken communication (Lynch, 2009).
- c) Intonation and Stress Interpretation: Capturing additional meanings conveyed through intonation and stress patterns (Rost, 2002).
- d) Contextual Understanding: Using contextual cues to grasp the situation and the speaker's intent (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002).
- e) Listening Memory: The ability to remember and process information heard over a short period (Lynch, 2009). This research measures listening skills through specially designed listening tests and analysis of the results.

5. SMKN 1 Banda Aceh

SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is a public high school located in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This school is selected as the research site due to its representative characteristics of students learning English as a foreign language. In this research context, SMKN 1 Banda Aceh is where data collection takes place, including classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, and the administration of listening tests.

6. EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

EFL refers to the study and use of English by non-native speakers in a context where English is not the primary language of daily communication. At SMKN 1 Banda Aceh, English is taught as a compulsory subject, and students are expected to develop competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This research focuses on listening skills within the EFL context, addressing the specific challenges students face when listening to English in both academic and non-academic settings.

7. Teaching Learning Process

The "teaching-learning process" refers to the series of interactive activities involving teachers and students aimed at achieving educational goals. In the context of this research, this process includes:

- a) Teaching Methods: Techniques and strategies used by teachers to teach listening skills, such as using authentic audio, guided listening exercises, and class discussions (Brown, 2006).

- b) **Learning Activities:** Activities undertaken by students to practice and develop their listening skills, including listening to recordings, answering comprehension questions, and performing task-based activities (Harmer, 2007).
- c) **Learning Environment:** The physical conditions and classroom atmosphere that can affect the learning process, such as noise levels, classroom comfort, and availability of supportive technology (Rost, 2002).
- d) **Evaluation and Feedback:** How teachers assess students' progress in listening skills and provide constructive feedback for further improvement (Brown, 2006). This research explores how the teaching-learning process at SMKN 1 Banda Aceh influences students' listening abilities and how challenges within this process can be addressed.