

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In learning English, there are four key skills students need to master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, listening plays a particularly crucial role. As Fariza (2022) points out, listening is the foundation of language learning. Before students can effectively speak, read, or write, they must first develop the ability to understand spoken language. Brown (2001) as cited in Miranty (2017), further emphasizes that listening is the primary way learners absorb linguistic knowledge, which is essential for producing language. In classrooms, students often spend more time listening than speaking, making it a critical skill for academic success.

Despite its importance, listening remains one of the most challenging skills for Indonesian EFL learners to master. According to Rost (2011), listening comprehension demands simultaneous processing of various linguistic and non-linguistic elements, including phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Additionally, the disparity between the English language's vowels and graphemes, as well as the many pronunciations, are some of the reasons why auditory comprehension is regarded as the hardest skill to learn (Vilema Macas, 2022).

Listening is often considered the most fundamental yet neglected skill in English language learning, particularly in EFL contexts such as Indonesia. Teaching listening faces significant challenges here, partly because the meaning-

construction process occurs internally in learners' minds, making it inaccessible to teachers (Nemtchinova, 2020). Furthermore, teachers still use the conventional method to teach listening by relying on audio playback and surface-level Q&A, without structured pre-listening or post-listening phases to develop students' metacognitive strategies. Meanwhile, the limitation of conventional methods in teaching is their inability to bridge the gap between linguistic knowledge and practical language use. Additionally, listening skills are often deprioritized as educators focus more on grammar and exam results than actual proficiency. (Fitrizah et. al. 2024).

However, this does not justify the neglect of teaching listening skills in the classroom. Yet the teaching and learning of how to listen effectively should be moved from students' private domain to the public space of the classroom for analysis and discussion (Nemtchinova, 2020). This is where the role of technology in teaching listening becomes essential. Digital platforms have revolutionized language pedagogy through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which enables the integration of authentic materials, interactive tasks, and immediate feedback into lessons (Levy, 1997; Beatty, 2010). However, effective use of such tools demands that teachers develop Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), the intersection of content expertise, pedagogical strategies, and technological proficiency (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

At the very least, technology serves as a tool that teachers can use to help students improve their listening skills. Technology has become a powerful solution for improving listening skills. Digital platforms, like language learning

websites and apps, give students access to authentic listening materials, interactive exercises, and personalized learning experiences. As Djabbarova (2020) stated, easy and enjoyable exercises that focus on the learning process rather than the outcome are the best method to develop or improve listening abilities. The role of technology can give students interactive experience that can help students enhance listening comprehension.

Tools like Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (RECLL) as a technology provide structured listening activities designed for different skill levels, helping students get used to natural speech patterns, accents, and speeds. By using technology in listening lessons, teachers can create more interesting and effective learning environments, closing the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication. Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab is a website that provide listening materials and some interactive activity to help enhancing students' listening skill.

Furthermore, a study by Miranty (2017), shows students' perception on the use of this website in interpretive listening class at university level. The study revealed that the students gave positive comments on the websites and stated that the website can be used as one of the sources in the listening class that make the listening class interesting.

Based on a preliminary observation conducted at SMAN 1 Medan during the researcher's PLP 2 program, it was found that English teachers rarely focused on teaching listening skills, let alone incorporating technology into their instruction. Teachers appeared to face difficulties in determining effective

methods for teaching listening. As a result, they paid less attention to this skill and seldom explored innovative or interactive approaches. This was evident in their continued reliance on traditional methods, such as basic conversation practice and having students listen to the teacher speaking at the front of the class.

After the preliminary observation, the researcher found that many students still struggle with listening comprehension. Initial interviews with several students revealed that this difficulty occurs because they have never been explicitly taught how to listen effectively or how the listening process works. Moreover, the use of technology that incorporates metacognitive strategies, such as Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (RECLL), has not yet been implemented in this classroom. Therefore, the researcher suggests that RECLL could be introduced as an alternative medium to support the teaching of listening comprehension.

Several relevant studies have demonstrated that Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (RECLL) effectively improves listening skills. Al Fatih (2022) reported significant learning gains among MTS students in Kendal, while Miranty (2017) highlighted positive university student perceptions of RECLL in interpretive listening classes. However, research on RECLL remains limited to contexts outside Indonesian senior high schools and focuses predominantly on effectiveness rather than implementation processes or teacher challenges. No study has specifically examined RECLL's use in Indonesian high schools, especially in an EFL environment like SMAN 1 Medan, where students struggle with authentic conversations and teachers seldom use technology for listening instruction. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how RECLL can be

integrated into listening comprehension teaching at SMAN 1 Medan, identifying challenges, and offering practical recommendations for similar contexts in Indonesia.

Despite the promise of RECLL website, its utilization in senior high school remains unexplored. Questions about its practicality in classroom environment remain unanswered. This study aims to investigate the utilization of RECLL as a medium for teaching listening comprehension in Senior High School. Understanding the answers to these questions is critical for addressing the gap in listening skill instruction in EFL settings.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, there two problems of this study that serve as the main focus, such as:

1. How does the teacher utilize Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab in teaching listening comprehension?
2. What are the challenges faced by the teachers in utilizing Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab website in the teaching listening comprehension?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems of the study, the objectives of the study were formulated as follows:

1. To analyze the process of utilizing Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab in teaching listening.

2. To identify the challenges faced by the teachers in utilizing Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab website in the teaching listening at.

1.4 Scope of the Study

In order to avoid the expansion of the research, it is very important to limit some of the problems. This study is limited to analyze the utilization of Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (RECLL) in teaching listening comprehension. Specifically, the research investigates how the website is implemented in the classroom and what challenges are encountered during its use. The study focuses on one English teacher at SMAN 1 Medan who teaches eleventh-grade students. Data will be collected through classroom observations and interviews with the teacher to gain a deeper understanding of both the instructional process and the obstacles faced in integrating RECLL into listening lessons.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This study is expected to have findings that useful theoretically and practically for:

1.5.1 Theoretically:

This study is expected to add insight and knowledge about how teacher used Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab as an interactive tool in teach listening comprehension to tenth grade students.

1.5.2 Practically

Practically this research can be useful for some aspects, as follows:

- a. For English teachers, through this research teachers can find out how the use of Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab used in the classroom.
- b. For students, the use of Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab will increase students' interest in learning English especially learning listening comprehension.
- c. For other research, this research can provide more explanations regarding the use of Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab website. Other researcher can use this study as a reference for their study related to the same topic.

