

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

English is the dominant language in all forms of global communication. The Indonesian Ministry of Education has realized the importance of English as a means of oral and written communication around the world, so the Indonesian Ministry of Education has integrated English as a compulsory subject that must start from junior high school to senior high school. As in SMAS Amir Hamzah Medan, English is one of the compulsory subjects in accordance with the curriculum that is still being implemented in that school, namely the 2013 curriculum. In line with the regulation, the Government of Indonesia through the Minister of Education and Culture issued decree number 24/2016 stating the Core Competencies and Basic Competencies of the 2013 Curriculum in Primary and Secondary Education. As an implication in the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary education, English is one of the subjects that must be given. Students must have language skills in learning. The four competencies in language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each of these skills is interrelated with each other.

In this study, the researcher focused on listening skills, more specifically listening comprehension. In the 2013 curriculum (revised in 2017), the basic competencies of listening to functional texts are included in KD 4.4.1, 4.5.1, 4.7.1, 4.8, 4.9. That is: “menangkap makna secara kontekstual terkait fungsi sosial, struktur teks,

dan unsur kebahasaan teks” (*capture meaning contextually related to social functions, text structure, and linguistic elements of texts*). *Menangkap Makna* has two different skills, namely Reading and Listening, but in this study the researcher focused on listening skills. This means that listening comprehension is a skill that needs to be implemented when learning English, and it is also an important part of learning English. Listening is very important because it is the skill that is most often used in everyday life. In fact, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) explain that listening has a significant role in human life. Learning listening comprehension will allow us to improve our communication skills.

Hamouda (2013) defines listening comprehension as an interactive process in which the listener is involved in constructing meaning. Therefore, listening comprehension refers to the various processes for understanding and comprehending spoken language, processing information, and deriving meaning from oral communication. In the learning process, listening comprehension will greatly help students understand the topic or lesson being studied. Listening comprehension plays an important role because it serves as a foundation for various aspects of language acquisition, which include speaking, reading, and writing skills. Considering these four skills, the researcher chose listening as the focus of study in this study to find out the problems faced by students in listening comprehension.

According to recent research, listening comprehension is very important for students to effectively understand learning, actively engage in class discussions, and improve their overall language proficiency. Students really need to pay attention to

listening comprehension, especially at school, because there are some materials in English lessons that require listening skills. Having good listening skills can help students with assignments when certain materials are given by the teacher. However, the listening section is still a difficult task for most students. Students who face challenges in this area have difficulty understanding the meaning conveyed through auditory information, thus hindering their ability to actively participate in classroom activities and hindering their language development. As Rost said in Hien (2015), listening is very important because it provides language input. As an input skill, listening plays an important role in students' language development. Therefore, improving listening comprehension skills is essential for students to learn to listen.

Listening comprehension skills requires more attention to develop students' language. Listening Comprehension is considered the most difficult language skill in language classes because it requires more attention and concentration to understand the material. Moreover, listening comprehension can be stressful. Yang (2009) stated in his study that students feel frustrated and helpless in listening. It can be a complex process that requires concentration, focus, and the ability to decode and interpret spoken language in real-time. Students may struggle with understanding different accents, rapid speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the overall context of the conversation. That's why listening comprehension requires processes to complete the material or task. Listening comprehension is a process, not a product.

There are problems in students' listening comprehension, which is supported by Goh's findings in a study by Yilmaz and Yavuz (2015). The most significant difficulties

that students in high school face when listening involve the speed with which they forget the content of conversations, the inability to identify words that are actually familiar, and the tendency to ignore parts of sentences when trying to understand their meaning. As a result, students have difficulty in forming mental representations of the information they hear. Common contributing factors include lack of background knowledge, lack of familiarity with the topic, weakness in grammar, lack of linguistic skills, lack of effective listening tactics, psychological mood, physical problems, and complex tasks. These factors are closely related to the listener's condition. Lack of exposure to the target language, along with lack of enthusiasm and motivation, are also identified as elements that contribute to students' listening comprehension difficulties.

The researcher utilizes seven indicators by Hamouda (2013) to analyze students' difficulties in listening comprehension at SMAS Amir Hamzah Medan. They are, listening materials, linguistic features, lack of concentration, psychological characteristics, the listener, the speaker and physical settings. There are some difficulties experienced by tenth grade students of SMAS Amir Hamzah Medan based on preliminary observation. Below is the example of students' difficulties in learning listening, exactly in listening comprehension of narrative text: Students struggle with understanding the vocabulary and language complexity present in narrative texts, especially if the text contains figurative language or unfamiliar terms. Example In a narrative text, phrases like "the apple of my eye" or "raining cats and dogs" can pose challenges for students who are not familiar with these figurative language. Students also struggle to interpret the conjunction like: Long, convoluted sentences or the use of

discourse markers like "meanwhile," "however," or "furthermore" can confuse students and disrupt their understanding of the narrative flow.

Thus, from the difficulties phenomenon experienced by students in listening comprehension of narrative text which was found by the researcher as preliminary observation, the researcher decided to choose this study entitled as "Students' Difficulties in Listening Comprehension at SMAS Amir Hamzah Medan"

A. The Problems of The Study

Based on the background of the study, the problem of the study is formulated as the following:

1. What are the difficulties faced by students in listening comprehension?
2. What are the factors that cause the difficulties in their listening comprehension?

B. The Objectives of The Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the objective of this study mainly intend as follow:

1. To investigate the difficulties faced by the students
2. To explore the causes of the difficulties in their listening comprehension

C. The Scope of The Study

In the tenth grade English syllabus, there are four skills that will be learned by students in different materials namely (speaking skills, reading skills, listening skills and writing skills). But in this study, this study will be focused on students' difficulties in listening skills K.D 4.7.1, specifically in listening comprehension in recount text at tenth grade students of SMAS Amir Hamzah Medan.

D. The Significances of The Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this research can develop and add insight into knowledge about analyzing student difficulties in listening comprehension.

Practically, this research is expected to help students, teachers and researchers in the field:

1. For students: they can find out their strength and weakness so that they can fix the weakness and improve the strength in listening comprehension
2. For teachers: by understanding students' difficulties, the English teacher can use this study as the information about the level of students' ability in listening comprehension and help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately improve their listening skills.
3. For future researchers: the results of this study can be used by further researchers as a reference to be able to present more complete information about other difficulties as well as what strategies students use to deal with listening comprehension. it can be the guidance for them to do a better research.