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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Theoretical Framework

1. The Nature of Listening Comprehension

Pourhossein (2011:784) stated that listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. The study of listening comprehension processes in a second or foreign language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic.

According to Steinberg in Alejandra (2013:56), listening comprehension can be defined as "the ability of one individual perceiving another via senses, (specifically aural) organs, assigning a meaning to the message and comprehending it". However, listening is more complex than merely hearing. "This process consists of four stages: sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering, and responding. The stages occur in sequence but we are generally unaware of them. Thus, it is possible to affirm that listening is a complex ability that needs to be developed from different aspects to have a successful performance in the practice of EFL, which implies a learner's engagement into this process.

Buck (2001:1-2) pointed out that listening is made up of both linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge. Linguistic knowledge is made up of



semantics, discourse structure, phonology, lexis, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. Jeon in Bilokcuokglu (2014: 78) characterised listening as “a set of activities that involves an individual’s capacity to apprehend, recognise, discriminate, or even ignore certain information. It has also been considered to contain complex and active processes that are involved in linguistic knowledge, personal expectation, cognitive processing skills, and world knowledge.

On the other hand, the listening skill has a vital role in developing foreign language competence. Nunan (1998:1) believed that listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without the listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact, over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language should affect intermediate foreign languages students’ listening skills and their implications in the development of their communicative competence.

In conclusion, listening is a complex ability that students have to learn. Listening combines what we hear with what we already know about the listening text and listening requires the understanding of the listeners to the message that speakers say.

a. Processes in Listening Comprehension

According to Vandergrift (2012:17-19). There are two processes in listening comprehension, top down processing and bottom up processing.



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These processes describe what listeners do during the act of listening, how they can do this efficiently, and how they regulate these processes.

Bottom-up processing involves segmentation of the sound stream into meaningful units to interpret the message. It is a rather mechanical process in which listeners segment the sound stream and construct meaning by accretion, based on their knowledge of the segmentals (individual sounds or phonemes) and suprasegmentals (patterns of language intonation, such as stress, tone, and rhythm) of the target language.

Top-down processing, on the other hand, primarily involves the application of context and prior knowledge to interpret the message. Listeners can apply different types of knowledge to the task, including: prior (world or experiential) knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, cultural knowledge about the target language, and discourse knowledge (types of texts and how information is organized in these texts).

b. Assessing Listening Comprehension

To assess students' listening comprehension, we need to know the basic types of it first. According to Brown (2003: 120-134) there are four types of listening and their assessments. The first type is intensive listening, it is used for perception of the components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers, etc.). In this type, the teacher can assess students by giving them assessments such as determining phonological and morphological elements, and paraphrase recognition.

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The second type is responsive listening. Listening to a relatively short stretch of language or in order to make an equally short response. In this type, the teacher can assess students by giving them assessment such as a simple question and answer format. The third type is selective listening. Processing stretches of discourse such as short monologues for several minutes in order to scan for certain information. In this type, the teacher can assess students by giving them assessments such as listening cloze tasks and information transfer

The last is extensive listening. The assessment that is used to develop a top-down, global understanding of spoken language. Listening for the gist, listening for the main idea, and making inferences are all part of extensive listening. In this type, the teacher can assess students by giving them assessments such as dictation, and communicative stimulus response tasks.

c. Students' Listening Comprehension

According to Fauzana (2014:6-7) learning to listen is an important skill, listener can improve their listening skill just as they improve any other skill. Listeners have to work out to catch the meaning that the speaker said in particular words and in particular occasions. In listening, the listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text.

Brown (2006:3) stated that language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning

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from them. The listeners often must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. According to Gebhard in Pourhossein (2011:784), in the process of listening, comprehension can only occur when the listener can place what he hears in a context. If the listener knows something about the speakers and his intention, comprehension is much easier. Familiarity with the text makes listening easier for the listener as he is able to relate to his own background knowledge.

In conclusion, listening comprehension is one of important skills for students to learn. Students need to match what they hear with their own background knowledge. Also, students require to be familiar with the topic in the listening task given in order to make them easier while listening process.

d. Factors Affecting Students' Listening Comprehension

According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012:58), cognitive factors and affective factors is the most important factors in listening. Cognitive and affective factors are divided into:

- 1) Cognitive factors:
 - a) Linguistic knowledge : refers to the knowledge that a student has in a language such as vocabulary knowledge and syntactic knowledge (grammatical knowledge).
 - b) Discourse knowledge: sometimes called script knowledge, refers to awareness of the type of information found in listening texts, how that

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information might be organized, and how listeners can use the information to facilitate comprehension.

- c) Pragmatic knowledge: involves the application of information regarding a speaker's intention that goes beyond the literal meaning of an utterance.
- d) Metacognitive knowledge : refers to the learners' knowledge and control of their listening process.
- e) Prior knowledge: refers to all knowledge and experiences that learners have. The role of prior knowledge in facilitating listening comprehension prompts the current methodological principle of providing listeners with a context. Contextualized listeners have the resources to activate prior knowledge and to develop a conceptual framework for inferencing (top-down processing).

2) Affective factors:

- a) Anxiety: refers to the learner's perceptions about their listening ability.
- b) Self-efficacy: refers to the learners' beliefs about their ability to successfully participate in learning activities.
- c) Motivation

Furthermore, Steinberg in Alejandra (2013:59-60) asserted that students' success in listening is primarily based on their communicative competence (which relates to the learner's knowledge of the vocabulary, phonology and rules of the language), *discourse competence* (which



relates to the learners' ability to connect utterances into a meaningful whole), *sociolinguistic competence* (which relates to the learners' ability to use language appropriately) and *strategic competence* (which relates to a learners' ability to employ strategies to compensate for imperfect knowledge).

On the other hand, Alejandra (2013:70-77) found that there are seven factors that influence students' listening comprehension such as the degree of students' motivation, paralinguistic features (the accent, noise, rate of delivery, pronunciation, and intonation), the lack of students' vocabulary, lack of students' concentration teacher's methodology, the use of material, the variety of tasks, and the learner's background knowledge. All of the factors have a strong impact how learners control their listening process.

In short, successful comprehension in listening is based on a lot of factors that students have such as the students' cognitive and affective factors, the students' competence in a language and etc. If the students can control their own difficulties in listening, they can easily comprehend about the listening task given.

2. The Nature of Prior Knowledge

According to Simon in Campbell (2009:9) prior knowledge is all knowledge that students have when entering a learning environment that is

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potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge. In the literature, the term prior knowledge is often used interchangeably with background knowledge. According to Jonassen and Gabrowski in Yuksel (2012:1198) prior knowledge is defined as the knowledge, skills, or ability that students bring to the learning process. Prior knowledge can be knowledge of the topic, the listening context, the text-type, the culture or other information stored in long-term memory as schemata (typical sequences or common situations around which world knowledge is organized).

Prior knowledge is the raw material that conditions learning. It acts as mental hooks for the lodging of new information and is the basic building block of content and skill knowledge (Campbell, 2009:9). Dochy and Alexander in Campbell (2009:9) go further by claiming that prior knowledge is the whole of a person's knowledge, including explicit and tacit knowledge, metacognitive and conceptual knowledge.

Furthermore, prior knowledge issue has been considered mostly by constructivist theorists. Bruner in Yuksel (2012:1197) asserted that constructivism started with Kant's ideas. Kant believed that human being can learn through his/her sensation, which is about how the world appear to us, rather than the exact world itself. He focused on the importance of prior knowledge to be able to understand the world or simply to learn.

The idea of prior knowledge is one part of the cognitive model of language processing. That model says that when people listen or read, we process the information we hear both top-down and bottom-up. *Top-down*



means using our prior knowledge and experiences; we know certain things about certain topics and situations and use that information to understand. *Bottom-up* processing means using the information we have about sounds, word meanings, and discourse markers like *first*, *then* and *after that* to assemble our understanding of what we read or hear one step at a time (Brown, 2006: 2).

Moreover, prior knowledge can be distinguished into two different types of knowledge as declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge can be thought of as “knowing what. Declarative knowledge can be thought as surface knowledge. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is a kind of higher level of knowledge that includes integration of knowledge, understanding the relationships between concepts and problem solving skills by this knowledge. Declarative and procedural knowledge are not the same, nor do they enable the same kinds of performance. It is common, for instance, for students to know facts and concepts but not know how or when to apply them.

Furthermore, prior knowledge is organized in schemata (the plural form of schema): abstract, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experiences. Alba and Hasher in Bilokcuoukglu (2014:79) stated that schema is ‘general knowledge a person processes about a particular domain’. Juan and Flor in Bilokcuokglu, (2014:79) pointed out that ‘schemata, the relevant packages of prior



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knowledge and experience that we have in memory, can call on in the process of comprehension.”

In short, prior knowledge is all existing knowledge that students have, then, they bring them to the learning process. It is a knowledge that is stored in long term memory as schemata. Also, prior knowledge comes from a cognitive processing model of a language called top down processing.

a. Students' Prior Knowledge

According to Wiley and Sons (2010:1-2) there are three levels of students prior knowledge: (1) accurate but insufficient (2) inappropriate and (3) inaccurate. In accurate but insufficient level, students have some portion of the knowledge needed for their assigned task, but not enough to support success. Since they recognize portions of the content, this can lead to overconfidence amongst the students (and instructor) about their ability to complete the assigned task.

In inappropriate level, knowledge is based on information that is factually correct, but is incorrect when applied to the current situation. This can often occur in a situation where a term has a particular meaning in common usage or in a specific field, but then has a different meaning in the new context. In inaccurate level, this is knowledge that has become integrated into an individual's worldview and has likely been reinforced over the years based on repeated inaccurate observations.

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Anderson and Lynch in Pourhossein (2011:784) stated that one of the reasons why students fail in learning process is the lack of prior knowledge on the topics discussed. Gebhard in Pouhossein (2011:784) also asserted that prior knowledge relates to our real world experiences and expectations that we have. This knowledge is very important when we consider the language processing problems of students.

In conclusion, prior knowledge has an important role to make students easier in learning process. Students who have a good prior knowledge, they will have a good comprehension in learning. Also, every student has different level of prior knowledge and it is based on how they attempt to learn on the topic discussed.

b. Assessing Students' Prior Knowledge

Assessing students' prior knowledge is very important because we have to find out how far they know about the task given. Wiley (2010:1-2) and Yuksel (2012:1198-1199) stated that there are some ways to assess students' prior knowledge in learning. First, one of the simplest ways to assess prior knowledge of students can be reflection or recording strategy. If teachers want to know what their students have already known, they can just ask them "what do you know". They asked the answers orally or in written format. This strategy is quite simple and effective way to activate prior knowledge

Second, the teacher can use brainstorming technique. The teacher begins by introducing a problem or a new topic and then, the students tell all

the possible answers, ideas and words. Third, the teacher can ask the students to make a small group discussion. In this strategy, teachers give a problem, a situation or a topic to their students to discuss in small groups. After discussion, groups share their ideas and findings with whole class. By doing that, teachers can observe students' prior knowledge related to the topic.

Fourth, the teacher analyzes students' prior knowledge by using KWL Strategy. K-W-L strategy developed by Ogle is a strategy that it aims to unite prior learning and new learning together. At this strategy, with the beginning of the lesson, a prepared sheet separated into three columns is given to each student. Then, in before learning phase, students are asked to write what is known about the topic and this part forms the K [*Known*] of K-W-L method. At second phase, students write their questions about what they want to learn related to the topic in second column W [*Wanted*]. Lastly, after learning the new topic, students fill the third column L [*Learned*] which is about what is learned.

Fifth, the teacher can analyze students' prior knowledge by making a concept map. Concept map is simply making connections in concepts via a linking verb which tells the relations between two concepts. It is defined as "a schematic device for representing a set of concept meanings embedded in a framework of propositions". It is a multifunctional tool that can be used in summarizing the topic, introducing the topic, assessment as well as prior knowledge activation tool.



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Finally, the teacher can ask the students to assess their own knowledge. Student self-assessment is also possible to require a degree of metacognitive ability that students may not possess at all levels. The self-assessment would be based on a list of concepts or skills that students would then rate their comfort/familiarity. There are also models where students would complete a test that also includes a self-assessment component, such as answering a question and then rating their confidence.

In this research, the researcher used student self-assessment to know the students' prior knowledge. To assess it, it is important to know the aspects that must be considered. According to Alidoost (2014:152) the prior knowledge assessment should present some key vocabularies that are presented in the same context as they will hear in the audio, the items that assess their understanding to the vocabularies, the items that present the grammatical features of the context, and the questions that are related to their own experiences.

3. The Correlation between Students' Prior Knowledge and Their Listening Comprehension

According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012: 65-66) prior knowledge is one of the cognitive factors that can affect students' success in listening. It plays an important role in listening. It influences how much information they were able to recall after listening to the text. Byrnes in Bilokcuokglu (2014:81) asserted that listening, which should be considered as the most important skill to be improved since it is the most frequently employed skill in



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our daily lives, is defined as a highly complex problem-solving activity. In the comprehension of this highly complex problem-solving activity, it has been hypothesised that background knowledge or prior knowledge plays a crucial role.

Soureshjani in Alejandra (2013:153) affirmed, “Having prior knowledge is a key feature of any kinds of listening materials, so language learners who want to improve their listening comprehension should have greater exposure to two kinds of listening materials: target culture texts and international target culture texts. Moreover, Brown et al in Huang (2015:117) also stated that the interactive nature between listeners’ past experiences and prior knowledge led to successful text comprehension.

In conclusion, prior knowledge is one of the important factors that students should have to make them easier in accomplishing a listening task. Students who have a good prior knowledge will have a good comprehension on a new listening material that they learn, instead, students who lack prior knowledge will have difficulty in understanding a new listening material.

B. Relevant Research

1. A research by Juarsih a 2012 alumnus State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau entitled “The correlation between prior knowledge and reading comprehension of the second year students of SMPN 21 Siak”. This research aimed to find out the students prior knowledge in reading. The writer concluded that there was a significant correlation between students’

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prior knowledge and their reading comprehension. It was based on the data analysis result that $0.473 > 0.361$ in significant standard 5% and 0.463 in significant standard 1% . It means that H_a was accepted which indicated that there was a high correlation between prior knowledge and reading comprehension. Moreover, the similarity between Juarsih's research and my research is the variable X of the research, but Juarsih's research focused on the correlation between prior knowledge and reading comprehension.

2. A research by Dina Arie Utari a 2016 alumnus State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau entitled "The correlation between prior knowledge and reading interest at Senior High School 3 Pekanbaru". This research aimed to find out students' prior knowledge toward reading skill and its effect to their reading interest. The writer found the result that there was a significant positive correlation between prior knowledge and their reading interest at Senior High School 3 Pekanbaru. The value of correlation coefficient 0.736 is bigger than 0.349 at 5% level of significant and 0.449 at 1% level of significant. It means that the higher students' prior knowledge, the higher their reading interest is and the lower students' prior knowledge, the lower students' reading interest will be. The correlation between Dina's research and my research is the variable X of the research, but Dina made the relationship of prior knowledge toward reading interest as variable Y.

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C. Operational Concept

The theoretical concepts, which has been discussed are still general and in abstract form. Therefore, they are required to be operationally described by a particular word that is easy to measure empirically. Therefore, in analyzing between the students' prior knowledge and their listening comprehension, the writer divided several indicators as a guidance to conduct this research into two parts, namely: the indicators of the prior knowledge and the indicators of the listening comprehension.

The indicators of the students' prior knowledge according to Alidoost et al (2014:52) can be seen in the following indicators:

1. Linguistic Knowledge:

- a. The students find the appropriate word from context.
- b. The students identify the meaning of the word.

2. Academic Experience:

- c. The students have an appropriate knowledge to the listening task given.

3. Syntactic Knowledge:

- d. The students identify the correct grammatical used related to the content in the listening task.

Furthermore, the indicators of listening comprehension are based on the syllabus at the school:

- a. Students identify the certain information of the narrative text listened.
- b. Students identify the event in the narrative text listened.

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- c. Students identify the meaning of expressions of congratulating someone.
- d. Students respond to the expressions of anger.

D. Assumption

In this research, the researcher assumes some assumptions. They are as follows:

1. The higher students' prior knowledge, the higher their listening comprehension will be.
2. The lower students' prior knowledge, the lower their listening comprehension will be.

E. Hypothesis

It is necessary for the researcher to formulate the hypothesis of the study as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant correlation between prior knowledge and listening comprehension of the second year students of SMAN 5 Pekanbaru.

2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a)

There is significant correlation between prior knowledge and listening comprehension of the second year students of SMAN 5 Pekanbaru.