

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Research

Listening skill is regarded as the essential skill in language learning. It seems that listening skill is very interesting to be researched since in daily life listening is the most frequently used, whether in the source or in the target language ((42%), followed by speaking (32%), reading (15%), and writing (11%))¹ but it merited little researched and pedagogical attention. Moreover, listening is a skill that should be completed with comprehension. Chastain defined listening comprehension as the ability to understand speech of native speakers at normal speed in listening situation.² In a similar token, listening comprehension is described as a complex process of what people use to understand speech. Then, listening comprehension is now acknowledged as an important facet of language learning.³

In order to accomplish the students' need toward listening comprehension, Curriculum Based School (KTSP) prescribes listening comprehension as one of the English materials that must be taught and be learned in senior high school. In MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru, the passing grade for English subject is 65 and based on the basic competence in the syllabus of this school for the second grade students that the students are able to respond meaning in the oral short functional text accurately, fluently and acceptably in various contexts of everyday life"⁴.

¹J. Flowerdew. 'Academic Listening Cambridge: Cambridge University Press', in Wang Gaiyan., "*Understanding Listening Comprehension Process and Effectively Organizing Class*".p.1

² K Chastain, 'Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory and Practice'. in FouadAbdalhamid, Master Thesis: "*Listening Comprehension Strategies of Arabaic-Speaking ESL Learners*"(Colorado: Colorado State University, 2012), p.11

³J. Morley, 'Aural Comprehension Instruction: Principles and Practices' in M.C Murcia(ed), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Laguage*, Boston: Heinle&Heinle –Thomson Learning, 2001, p. 69-85

⁴Faulina. "*Silabus Bahasa Inggris Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru 2010-2011*". Pekanbaru: Unpublished. 2010

In order to develop the students listening comprehension, in MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru, listening has been taught separately from three other skills; speaking, writing, and reading for the purpose that the students could have full concentration in listening to the spoken monologue text and listening taught by using some techniques such as question and answer, games, discussion, and dictation. Generally, the teacher divided the listening activity into three stages; pre-listening, during listening, and after listening.

In pre-listening activity, the teacher asked the students about what they already knew about the topic they would learn or the teacher herself provided the appropriate information, including the information about the speaker, topic of presentation, and the concepts and the vocabulary that were likely to be embedded in the presentation. Then, in during listening activity, the teacher gave the students the spoken monologue text by playing CD or by dictating the passage to the class. Finally, after listening activity, the teacher asked the students to identify the main idea, the character, the event, and the argument based on the spoken text.

Based on the description above, ideally, the students in MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru are able to have good listening comprehension. In short, the students in MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru have no problem with their listening comprehension. However, based on the preliminary observation, the researcher found that it was contrary to the reality in the classroom. She saw that some of the students were not able to comprehend the spoken monologue text. It can be seen from the following phenomena:

1. Some of students are difficult to identify the topic
2. Some of students are difficult to comprehend the new topic
3. Some of the students are difficult to grasp the content of the topic
4. Some of the students are lack of comprehension about the topic
5. Some of students do not use their prior knowledge while listening the exercise therefore they are difficult to make inference what they hear about

Considering the phenomena above, the teacher is expected to be able to help the students to improve their listening comprehension by providing the appropriate teaching materials and positive classroom circumstances where the students could be accustomed to listening English. It is believed that if students listen to the target language all day, they will improve their listening comprehension skill through the experience.⁵ On that account, the students' prior knowledge as well as experience is playing the important role in improving listening comprehension.

According to Joan attending and interpreting are accomplished more effectively when students know when and how to bring and to bear their prior knowledge of the world and of foreign language in processing auditory information.⁶ It means that students will be successful in listening comprehension if they know when and how to pick up their prior knowledge from their minds. Stevens defines prior knowledge quite simply as what one already knows about the subject. For students, they will be able to recall their prior knowledge if they can relate what they already know about a subject from the topic they learn in the class based on the syllabus for listening comprehension, for instance, listen to the text analytical exposition about global warming. Global warming is included as the general issues in daily life, meaning that it is not impossible that the students would have had a little bit knowledge about that topic, so they will learn easily by connecting their prior knowledge with the lesson they will learn.

Some researchers (e.g. Richards, Christine, & Christa) believed that listeners' linguistic knowledge and prior knowledge are essential factors that could affect their understanding of the foreign language. Also, it is believed in the literature that learners' prior knowledge and content schemata can affect the

⁵D.Mandelsohn, 'There are Strategies for Listening', in ParvanehHabibi&ShakrohJahandar,'The Impact of Teaching Phonetic Symbols on Iranian EFL Learner's Listening Comprehension', *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Science*, Vol. 3 (3), 2013, p.495

⁶Joan Rubin, 'Improving ForeignLanguageListeningComprehension', in James Elatis (ed.), *Linguistics, Language Teaching, and Language Acquisition: The interdependence of Theory, Practice and Research*, 1990. Georgetown. Georgetownuniversity Press. P. 78

quality of listening comprehension to a large extent.⁷ Again, researchers in reading support the notion that activating prior knowledge or knowledge of the world and applying this knowledge to new input greatly facilitate processing and understanding.⁸ Listening like reading is an active process that entails construction of meaning beyond simple decoding. Activation of what is known about the world clearly assists processing the aural code. The major purpose is the construction of meaning by matching what listener hears with what they already know, i.e. their prior knowledge. The internal resource includes a bank of power, knowledge and global expectations about language and the world. It is used by the listener to make predictions about what the incoming message is expected to be at any point, and how the pieces fit into the whole.

Altogether, based on the students' background problem as mentioned earlier and the importance of the prior knowledge based on the several theorists above, it can be indicated that the students with their prior knowledge have much more successful in their listening comprehension than those without when they listen to the listening exercises, therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting the research about the contribution of prior knowledge toward listening comprehension.

B. The Problem of the Research

1. The identification of the Problems

1. The students are not able to comprehend the spoken monologue text since they have less experience of listening to different accents

⁷Samira Hayati Samian, 'The Relationship Between Prior Knowledge and EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension: Cultural Knowledge in Focus', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 3 (1), 2012, p. 362

⁸M. Graves & Cook, 'Effects of Previewing Difficult Short Stories for High School Students', in Morteza Bakhtiarvand, 'Is Listening Comprehension Influenced by the Cultural Knowledge of the Learners? A case Study of Iranian EFL Pre-Intermediate Learners', *Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences*, Vol 9

2. The students are not able to comprehend the content of the topic in the spoken monolog text because they have less background knowledge about the topic
3. The students are not able to recognize the word in the spoken monologue text since they lack in lexis for the reason that they hear new words they had never listened before

2. The Limitation of the Problems

The problems identified above are quite broad, the researcher limited the problems of the research into the students' prior knowledge and their listening comprehension of the second year students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru.

3. The Formulation of the Problems

From those phenomena above, the researcher would like to formulate the problems as follows:

1. How is the students' prior knowledge of the second grade students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru?
2. How is students' listening comprehension of the second grade students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru?
3. Is there any significant contribution between prior knowledge and listening comprehension of the second grade students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru?

C. The Objective and the Significance of the Research

1. Objective of the Research

Based on the research questions formulated above, thus, the objectives of this research are as follows:

- a. To know the students' prior knowledge
- b. To know the students' listening comprehension

- c. To find out the contribution between students' prior knowledge and listening comprehension.

2. Significance of the Research

The significance of this research are :

- a. To the teacher and the students: to give information and contribution for students and teacher that activating prior knowledge can be indicated as an important step to be done in pre-listening as the effort to improve the students' listening comprehension.
- b. This research finding is also expected to be practiced in order to develop the theories on teaching and learning English as a foreign language and for those who are concerned in the world of language teaching and learning in general.
- c. To the researcher; this research is relevant to the researcher's status as a student of the English Education Department and Teacher Training Faculty, State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, as the requirement to acquire bachelor degree.

D. The Definition of Terms

This thesis is the contribution of prior knowledge toward listening comprehension of second year students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru. It needs to define the terms used to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpreting.

1. Contribution

Contribution is a connection between two things in which one thing affects or depends on another thing. In other words, contribution is a measure of the relationship between two set data in this research; it is a way to predict contribution between students' prior knowledge

and listening comprehension of the second grade students at MAN 02 Model Pekanbaru.

2. Prior Knowledge

Prior knowledge is what one already knows about a subject or all knowledge learners have entered a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge.⁹ And the prior knowledge meant by the researcher here is the particular prior knowledge related to one topic what students learn and get the exercise in listening comprehension, for example based on the syllabus the students will have listening exercise of analytical exposition about global warming that the students will have the general knowledge about global warming before getting the listening exercise.

3. Listening Comprehension

The process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language.¹⁰In this research, it means that when students can comprehend the listening materials by relating the topic to their prior knowledge that can be proved if the students can pass the minimum score of the test.

⁹K.C. Steven, 'The Effect of Background Knowledge on the Reading Comprehension of Ninth Grades', in Nicole Strangman and Tracey Hall, 'Background Knowledge', *National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum* (NCAC), p.2

¹⁰Jack C. Richard, John Platt and Heidi Platt. *Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics Longman Dictionary* (England: Pearson Educatio Limited. 1999), p.216.