

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1. Background**

In recent years, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has become very popular. The purpose of English language teaching is to improve the learners' four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of these four language skills, listening becomes one of primary skills in learning and teaching English. Ur (1989) asserts that teaching listening comprehension is one of the major tasks in TEFL. Although listening is a "receptive skill", rather than a "productive skill", in the process of interpreting messages of what people utter (Lindsay & Knight, 2006 as cited in Su & Liu, 2012, p.458), listening comprehension would be the hardest of all the four language skills of i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, especially, to EFL learners. This situation can be traced to that listeners have to receive the message in a foreign language, de-code it and comprehend it instantly in a meaningful context; thereof, it would not be difficult to imagine that they might encounter a variety of hurdles, for example grasping main ideas of the dialogues in contexts, and therefore suffer from anxiety.

Listening is different from hearing. As Andrade (2006) defines listening as the ability to hear attentively and to understand what others are saying. In addition, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) state that listening is a process of receiving what the speaker says, making and showing meaning, negotiating meaning with

the speaker and answering, and creating meaning by participation, creativity, and empathy. In conclusion, listening is not merely hearing what other speaker is saying, but it is a process of understanding and getting the meaning of what others are saying.

Listening plays an important role in daily communication and educational process. As Guo and Wills (2006) state that it is the medium through which people gain a large proportion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. Furthermore, according to Nunan (1998), most people think that being able to write and speak in a second language means that they know the language; however, if they do not have the efficient listening skills, it is not possible to communicate effectively. That is, listening is the basic skill in language learning and over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening.

According to Rost (2002), previous researchers have revealed that a large proportion of the L2 study findings indicates that listening is the most important skill for language learning. It is one of the crucial components of spoken language processing, there is no spoken language without listening. Emphasizing the importance of listening, Duzer (1997) states that listening is a critical element in the competent language performance of adult second language learners, whether they are communicating at school at work or in the community. Wallace, Stariha & Walberg (2004) state that listening skills are also important for learning

purposes since through listening students receive information and gain insights. Poor listening can lead to unnecessary arguments and problems.

Listening skills should be taught effectively in the EFL classroom in order to produce better English speakers. As Andrade (2006) proposed that listening is a complementary skill to speaking, and it is important to stress listening in teaching English to the students for becoming good speakers. However, teaching listening is neglected in that teachers are generally less aware of its importance for students. The teaching of listening is neglected and poorly taught aspect of English in many EFL programs (Mendelsohn, 1994 as cited in Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011, p. 977). Therefore, the teachers should consider that listening skill is an important component of language learning.

Listening is one of the most challenging skills for both teachers and learners. As Bingol, Celik, Yildiz, and Mart (2014) describe that second language learners have significant problems in listening comprehension because of the fact that schools pay more attention to structure, writing, reading and vocabulary. Besides, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) agree that listening and speaking skills are not important parts of many course books or curricula and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons. In addition to this, Osada (2004) reported that listening has not drawn much attention of both teachers and learners, they are generally less aware of its importance. In classrooms, teachers seem to test, not to teach listening. Meanwhile, students seem to learn listening, not listening comprehension. As a result, it remains the most neglected and the least understood aspect of language teaching (Glisan,

1985). In order to help students improve their listening ability, language teachers have to understand students' listening difficulties in comprehending spoken texts, and instruct effective listening strategies to help students solve their listening difficulties.

There are some reasons why listening is neglected. Persulesy (1988) as cited in Hamouda (2013) states that one of the reasons for the opinion that listening is a skill that tends to be neglected is the feeling among language teachers that this skill is automatically acquired by the learner as the student learns to speak the language. According to Hamouda (2013), another reason why this skill is not given serious attention is the fact that incompetence in it is easy to hide through nodding and shaking of the head, which may give the impression of understanding, even there is none. Due to the fact above, language teachers should understand the students' listening difficulties to help students solve their problems.

A study conducted by Rozi (2017) to the tenth graders of SMA Muhammadiyah 6 Palembang, the teacher of English had done efforts to increase the students' ability especially in listening. It showed that the students' listening comprehension was still low because there were only 10% students could reach 76 as the standard score of *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) on their test, this result was taken by the students' listening comprehension test which indicated that most students got 40 to 60 on the average of the class. However, some of students just listened to whatever teacher said or listened audio without doing and getting something. The process of learning only focused on teacher (teacher

center). Therefore, students could not focus and get the points from the listening session. Moreover, they did not comprehend the messages of the speakers they listened to. When they had got points or ideas from listening to the teacher or tape recording, they could not remember it. Rozi's study (2017) showed that the students faced some problems in the process of learning listening.

There are many problems faced by language learners in listening comprehension. As Goh (2000) mentions that there are ten listening comprehension problems, such as; (1) quickly forget what is heard; (2) do not recognize words they know; (3) understand words but not the intended message; (4) neglected the next part when thinking about meaning; (5) unable to form a mental representation from words; (6) cannot chunk streams of speech; (7) miss the beginning of the texts; (8) concentrate too hard or unable to concentrate; (9) do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems; and (10) confused about the key ideas in the message. Moreover, Malkawi (2010) had proposed three listening problems that senior high school students in Tabaria usually face in listening comprehension, such as: 1) speech speed; 2) limited knowledge of vocabulary and structure of sentences; and 3) limited knowledge of topic in question. Clearly, various matters impede senior high school students' EFL listening comprehension.

In relation to this, a preliminary study was conducted through observation and interview by the researcher at MAN 1 Palembang. The result of the observation showed that listening skill was one of the complex problem that the learners faced in understanding because the learners weren't accustomed to listen

to the listening material especially when the listening audio ran too fast. It was assumed due to the learners' lack of vocabulary and less practice of listening comprehension material. This observation result is supported with interview result to RL, one of the English teachers at MAN 1 Palembang. According to RL (personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019), listening comprehension became her main problem in teaching English at MAN 1 Palembang. Furthermore, according to RL, some students have: (1) difficulty in linking the words heard to the meanings in time, (2) failure to comprehend the meanings of the phrases even though they recognize each word heard in the phrases, (3) mistaking one word for another that carries a similar pronunciation, (4) inability to remember the words, or phrases they just heard, and (5) inability to comprehend a long conversation. For these reasons, it becomes a challenge for RL in teaching listening comprehension for the students. Listening skill became the main anxiety source for her and instead of supporting the learners with a kind of comprehensible input. This phenomena indicates that the teacher faced difficulties in teaching listening comprehension.

Based on the explanation, preliminary study, and previous study, there is a need to conduct a study to investigate deeper about difficulties faced by teachers in teaching listening comprehension at MAN 1 Palembang as this is never been done before and the result can be a useful information for English teachers, schools, government to create better policies which can improve English Language Teaching (ELT) in Madrasah Aliyah.

## **1.2. Research Problem**

Based on the background, the research problem was formulated in the following question: “What were the teacher’s difficulties in teaching listening comprehension at MAN 1 Palembang?”

## **1.3. Research Objective**

In accordance with the problem above, the objective of this study was to find out the teacher’s difficulties in teaching listening at MAN 1 Palembang.

## **1.4. Significances of the Study**

This study was expected to provide significance to the following parties:

1. For the teacher

This study was expected to find out the difficulties that the teachers faced in teaching listening. Therefore, the result of this study was expected to be a consideration for the teaching and learning of listening.

2. For the students

This study was expected to provide positive influences to the students in the listening classes.

3. For the next researchers

For the next researchers, this study was expected to provide information as a reference for further studies.

#### 4. For the researcher herself

This study was expected to gain the researcher's knowledge and experience in educational research.