

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Listening skill is one of the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is a receptive skill, the way in which people extract meaning from the discourse they hear. This skill must be taught if the ability to understand the spoken form of the foreign language is not acquired naturally. Consequently classes of listening comprehension are now included in the curricula in English department in Universities.

One of the listening types that is commonly taught at schools and universities is listening comprehension, the decoding of the stream of speech, which involves continual mental processing, concentrated attention, and memory. Listening as a major component in language learning has shown its important role in learning language for EFL learners. The fact shows that listening skill is a crucial part of language acquisition.

The importance of this skill is that the role of comprehension is prominent as learners listen before they engage to respond orally. Through reception learners internalize linguistic information and without this, one cannot produce language. And it is true that part of being a proficient speaker is listening to oral language and understanding what is said. In fact that only people who can listen well can communicate easily. It means that if we understand what other people are speaking, we will be able to give response appropriately. Effective

communication then does happen and it is in fact the goal of learning a language in which learning to listen is a part of its process.

In principle, the objective of listening comprehension practice in the classroom is that students should learn to function successfully in real life listening situation. Because of this significant expectation, what would be helpful and suitable to achieve the objective should be brought into the classroom

In English Department of Nusantara PGRI Kediri University, listening as one of the subjects is conducted in three semesters: Listening I in the first semester, Listening II in the second semester, and Listening III in the third semester. The class which is run 100 minutes is usually conducted in a language laboratory which has forty booths where the lecturer can use tape recorder, CD/VCD player, computer, and LCD.

There is not any listening syllabus provided by Nusantara PGRI Kediri University and it is the lecturers who develop listening syllabus and materials where in Kediri there are only limited bookstores. At the beginning of each semester, lecturers sit together to arrange syllabuses for that semester. The materials are generally taken from the available books which in fact are very limited.

Based on the listening syllabus the lecturer has developed so far, the students at the third semester should be able to have listening comprehension at intermediate level. However, the students have difficulties to obtain this level. It is shown by the fact that the students often cannot do the listening tasks individually on time. In short, the students' listening comprehension is still low, they failed in

identifying the pragmatic units, connecting linguistic and other cues, and using background knowledge and context to interpret meanings. It is proved by the students' score of listening final exam from the previous semester in which the average score was only 56. Those difficulties can be shown from several aspects. Generally, as a listening lecturer the researcher often finds the situation of the class is not alive. In addition to the situation, the students didn't show much interest in the lesson. For example, the students are occupied with their mobile phone, draw unnecessary things in their workbook, talk to their friends, and simply do not listen to the materials played or explained during the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, they also do not show high motivation to learn listening. They never try to practice listening outside the classroom despite knowing that listening is an important skill.

The result of the questionnaire to collect information about the students' difficulties in listening comprehension conducted last April 2008 reveals that there are two things that should be changed; the teaching technique and the materials. It showed that only 37% from 27 students are interested in the materials, while the rest of the students are not interested in the materials. Students said that the materials are not familiar to them. The fact also showed that 74% of the students are not attracted with the teaching technique used by the lecturer which is said to be monotonous way of teaching. Students also lack of practice. The condition is worsened by the result of questionnaire which showed that 66% among the 27 students never practice listening outside the classroom.

So far, she usually used textbooks that do not attract the students' attention enough. In addition to the textbook use, she usually only apply the strategies provided in the books which actually should be adapted to the students' needs where in listening comprehension they are expected to be able to get the gist of the discourse, understand the main points and important details, and recognize the opinion and attitude of the speaker Ying-hui (2006: 4). The textbooks do not provide any visual cues to help students more aware of speaker's attitude. Furthermore, they do not provide enough pedagogical support to help students with their lack of linguistic knowledge. Because of the drawback the textbooks possess, the students often show little attention to the material being presented.

So, the problem mentioned above is assumed to be caused mainly by the appropriateness of materials and the teaching techniques which do not arouse the students' interest and motivation. The techniques are said to be sometimes monotonous that result in students' boredom. Based on this class situation, the researcher is interested in carrying out a research dealing with the listening materials to improve the students' listening comprehension because as a lecturer, she wants to be able to solve the problem in her classroom practices in order that the goal of the teaching and learning process that is already set can be successfully achieved. To solve that problem, she would like to use authentic materials in teaching listening to improve the students' listening comprehension.

Authentic material is selected as a solution to this problem. Authentic material according to Peacock in Martinez (2002: 1)) is material that has been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community. Widdowson

in Martinez (2002: 1) defines authentic material as material designed for native speakers of English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for. For example, a radio news report is brought into the classroom so students discuss the report on pollution in the city where learners live. While Harmer (2001: 205), defines authentic materials as language where no concessions are made to foreign speakers. He adds that it is normal, natural language used by native – or competent – speakers of a language. This kind of language is what students encounter (or will encounter) when they come into contact with target-language speakers in real life. In short, authentic materials are materials which are not designed for classroom practices, especially in ESL classroom.

The common reasons of using authentic materials in the classroom practices is that authentic materials afford examples of real life English where in everyday conversation there are hesitation, false starts, filled and empty pauses, etc., which characterized natural speech. This kind of materials also help learners to become familiar with the real cadences of the target language, and learners need practice in the real-life task of extracting meaning from utterances where much of the language is beyond their current state of knowledge.

Underwood (1989: 100) says, "Authentic materials allows the students to hear a much more real act of communication with all the interactional features which are normally not found in scripted materials". If students are given a chance to listen to a range of authentic texts, they will sample many different voices, with various accents. They will also hear people expressing things in a variety of ways,

for example, anger that is expressed by shouting or by choice of words or by many interruptions. In short, learners are confronted with 'real life' experiences in which they will have to function.

Authentic materials such as movies, songs, and chatting at a party are often entertaining. With the application of this material, students will learn the target language in unconscious process. As they become absorbed in the activity they feel free from any burden like anxiety, fear, being shy etc that they may experience. The latest news, attending a lesson and being tested orally in a subject of study are often informative that students are eager to know any information they contain. In addition, because the language is usually colloquial, the students will be encouraged to be more attentive as long as the task and the purpose of listening are explicitly stated. Furthermore, authentic materials are often rich in vocabulary. Authentic materials which are carefully selected to be appropriate with learners' interest are definitely challenging and useful for them.

Moreover, students will realize that to be able to communicate they have to listen to a variety of samples, and be aware of how second language acquisition and comprehensible input plays a vital role in language learning, so, they need some degrees of exposure to authentic materials in order that they can apply the language in real life situations. Starting with those all, students will be interested to listen to the lesson, and with their firm intrinsic motivation the success of understanding the materials will be satisfactorily achieved.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Despite the advantages and some supporting explanations about the authentic materials, it is still in questions whether they are really suitable with any students' characteristics. This is because there may be some other aspects affecting the success and failure of classroom practices. Based on the background elaborated above, the questions of this research are formulated as follows:

1. Can and to what extent authentic materials improve students listening comprehension?
2. What happens with classroom situation when authentic materials are used in teaching and learning process of listening comprehension?

C. Objective of the Study

The research is conducted as a result of the identified problem arising in a classroom. As a classroom practitioner, the researcher is trying to find a solution by offering authentic materials which may be the best solution to the problem. The objectives of the study have been determined, they are:

1. To identify whether authentic materials can improve students listening comprehension.
2. To describe what happens with the classroom situation when authentic materials are used in teaching and learning process of listening comprehension.

D. Benefit of the Study

The research is expected to gain a clear result which is informative and has beneficial contribution to all readers in general and for the following parties in particular.

1. For the writer, the result of the research will provide information about the ways in improving students' listening comprehension ability.
2. For students, it is very useful to facilitate their learning process.
3. For Nusantara PGRI Kediri University, it will be valuable information for the improvement of student's quality.
4. For other researchers, it can be a reference for further similar study.