

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

In the process of teaching and learning English, students' ability in mastering the four language skills becomes an important goal. These will involve receptive skills; listening skill (understanding the spoken language), reading skill (understanding written language) and productive skills; speaking skill (producing spoken language) and writing skill (producing written language). Unfortunately, most of Indonesia education institutions in which English is one of first foreign languages have concerned with the teaching of written language. In fact, mastering spoken language is very important in communication. In order to master the spoken language, we must be able to speak and we must be able to listen to spoken language.

In language classroom, listening tends to be neglected; many language educators assume that listening is automatically acquired while the learners learn to speak a language. Rost states that unlike speaking, however, through which we can record a child's first words and even measure the fluency of a person's contribution to a conversation, listening is less directly observed and less noticeable in both its development and its everyday use (1994:1). However, students need to learn how to listen to improve their listening ability.

Listening is very important in language learning, students understand the content of spoken language by listening. The relationship between listening and

language learning is that language learning depends on listening. Listening provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken language. Rost (1994: 148) states that teaching listening is an important part of second language teaching. Most teaching methodologies emphasize the role of listening in language learning.

Listening is not a simple process. In order to understand the content of spoken language, students require some of listening skills. Nunan describes listening as follows:

In relation to listening, learners need skills in segmenting the stream of speech into meaningful words and phrases: the ability to recognise words, phrases and words classes: ways of relating incoming message to one's own background knowledge, and identifying the rhetorical and functional intent of an utterance or parts of an aural text: skills in interpreting rhythm, stress and intonation to identify information focus and emotional / attitudinal tone: the ability to extract the gist/or essential information from longer aural texts without necessarily understanding every word (1998:6).

In line with Rost (1994:136-137) states that understanding how listening ability develops requires a comprehensive view of what it means to improve. Listening involves psychological skills, such as recognizing between sounds, parsing speech into constituent parts and processing the discourse in term of cohesion, logic and relevant underlying schemas. Rost (1994:148) also says that listening can be taught as component skills. Specific learning activities can be designed which target specific skills. Furthermore, students' listening ability can be improved by developing their listening skill.

Teaching listening of foreign language is the most difficult one. Foreign language students do not have native speakers' competence in using their background knowledge and for recognizing words or grammatical characteristic of spoken language easily. Listening is also more difficult than reading, a reader can cast an eye back over misunderstood phrase, but the listener gets no second time. English is a compulsory subject in Indonesia, which must be taught starting from Junior High School level until University level involving the teaching of listening. The problems which are faced by students in learning listening may be caused by many factors, such as teacher, students, teaching technique and teaching material.

This research focuses on the listening problems as experienced by the eighth grade students of SMP N 10 Surakarta. Based on *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP) in teaching listening at the eighth grade students of SMP, the students are expected to be able to: 1) understand the meaning of a simple transactional and interpersonal dialogue, 2) understand the meaning of a functional and short simple monologue spoken text in the form of descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, and report text related to surrounding environment.

In the real condition, the students have lack of listening ability in understanding the content of spoken text. This problem is indicated as follows: 1) the students are difficult to recognize the words and grammatical characteristic of spoken text, 2) the students are difficult to catch the clues information of spoken text, 3) the students are difficult to infer the speaker's intention or meaning, 4) the students are difficult to do the listening task and 5) Most of the students are still confused with the

purpose of their listening activity. In addition, the classroom situation is not live during the teaching and learning process, it is shown as follows: 1) Most of the students do not active in answering the teacher's questions, 2) most of the students do not try to ask the teacher about their difficulties in listening, 3) Some of the students just listen to the teacher without doing the listening task, 4) Some of the students are busy in talking to their friends and 5) the students seem to be bored in doing the listening activity.

Those problems are caused by: the lack of the students' vocabularies and grammar, the low of the students' listening strategy; they try to understand the content of spoken language word by word, rather than try to link what they hear with their previous knowledge or try to find clue information, and the difficulties of the listening tasks. Besides, the teaching technique and teaching material are the main factors causing the lack of the students' listening ability. The technique which is used by the teacher is reading the text twice or three times and followed by several questions, rather than gives specific task to the students before listening. It makes the students confused with their listening purpose. The teacher hardly ever uses recorded material in listening that makes the students bored and very difficult to listen to the English of native speakers.

To overcome these problems, the English teacher and I would like to conduct an action research study by using text-based task (TBT). In TBT, students process the text based on the listening task given. Willis gives the term 'text-based task' to design communicative tasks based on reading and listening text or video

extracts (1998:67). Text-based tasks also bring efficient listening strategies, strategies to comprehend the content from detail linguistic components and from students' background knowledge. This is argued by Willis (1998:75) who states:

All text based-tasks aim to encourage natural and efficient reading / listening / viewing strategies, focusing initially on retrieval of sufficient relevant meaning for the purpose of the task. This will entail both holistic processing, i.e. gaining an overall impression, and picking up detailed linguistics clues: a combination of what are commonly called 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes.

Task is used as a means of delivering teaching materials to students and to create enjoyable classroom environment by engaging students in the learning process through the use of task. According to Willis (1998:40), states that language learners need variety and security. A wide range of topics, texts and task types gives learners variety. A framework with three distinction phases; pre-task, task cycle and language focus also gives them a sense of security. Language focus phase after the task cycle makes students to begin to worry less about new language they meet during the task cycle because they know they will have a chance to explore it later. Willis (1998:83) also explains that the aims of text-based tasks are to provide a wide repertoire of task types and designs based on written and spoken texts and require learners to apply their real-world knowledge and experience to assign meaning to what they see, hear or read.

The research uses recorded text by fluent or native speakers to give variety in teaching listening and to introduce the natural characteristics of spoken text to students. Cross (1995:250) argues that through recording, the class can be offered the

chance to hear naturally spoken English, with elisions, linked consonants, weakened vowels and all the hesitations, false starts and imperfections of unplanned speech. In line with Rost (1996:160) states that many language educators, (e.g. Besse, et al) point out that there is a great advantage in using pre-recorded texts of native speaker conversations and native speakers oriented programmes in the classroom because of the genuineness they provide.

Moreover Morton (1999:177) states that the use of authentic texts enable students to study 'real' English instead of the English contrived by teachers. Authentic texts are thought to motivate students because they are derived from the ultimate goal of students' studies-English as used by native speakers. Therefore, recorded text can motivate students and they get a challenge to attempt to understand language as it as actually used by native speakers.

Based on the descriptions above, I am inspired to conduct an action research study at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 10 Surakarta. Through action research, the teacher and I can observe the students' problems, monitor the students' listening ability improvement by the action research's cycle, and make some reflections to be implemented for further practice. Wallace states that action research involves the collection and analysis of data related to some aspect of our professional practice. This is done so we can reflect on what we have discovered and apply it to our professional action (1999: 16-17). This study aimed at the improvement of the students' listening ability and at the improvement of the classroom listening situation using Text-Based Task.

## **B. The Problem Statements**

The problems of this research can be formulated as follows:

1. Does and to what extent the use of Text-Based Task improve the students' listening ability at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 10 Surakarta?
2. How is the classroom situation when Text-Based Task is implemented in the listening class?

## **C. The Objectives of the Study**

This study has some objectives which include:

1. To identify the improvement of the students' listening ability during and after implementing Text-Based Task at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 10 Surakarta.
2. To identify the classroom situation when Text-Based Task is implemented in the listening class.

## **D. The Benefits of the Study**

This research is expected to be able to give some benefits for the students, the teacher, the school and me myself.

Through Text-Based Task, students become more purposeful in their listening activity, they know what they have to do because of the task appearance before listening. The function of integrated bottom-up and top-down strategies in

TBT to process the text helps students to link what they heard and what they have known in listening text. The use of text recorded by the native speakers introduces the natural characteristic of English speech and to motivate students in listening as it is actually used by native speakers.

By this research, it is expected that the teacher can choose appropriate listening technique in improving students' listening ability. Moreover, the school where the research is conducted get the beneficial contribution of the use of Text-Based Task to overcome the students' problems in learning listening. The result of the study will also give a great experience to me myself to increase my knowledge about TBT and about listening. For English Department of Sebelas Maret University and other researchers, the result of the study provides information to lead further study about listening and about action research.