

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Listening skill is essential to the learning of English as a second or foreign language. There are five reasons which support this opinion.

First, listening serves as the basis for the development of other language skills, i.e. speaking, reading and writing. It happens because the spoken words provide channels for thinking and patterns of expressions; channels to learn how to speak, read and write. Thus, by making a frequent effort to listen to a new language, people have opportunities to master it. This view is supported by the results of the study done by Kencono among the university students in Jakarta in 1975 (Chamdiah et.al., 1987:3).

Second, listening is essential to communicative interaction. Underwood, as quoted by Hartono (1991:2), says that by listening, people attend to process, understand, interpret and respond to what they hear. A clear example might be taken from normal daily life communication in which listening occurs in conjunction with speaking. A person who has adequate listening will understand and be understood easily.

Third, listening is used to broaden people's knowledge. By listening, they may pick up information as well as learn many things they need to know. According to Nichols and Stevens (1957:18), at any moment, the ears have opportunities of gathering information because nearly anyone within the listening distance becomes a potential source of information. The most obvious examples occur in school or on the job where people are learning new information formally. But people also spend time listening in situations that are not specifically defined as learning situations. It might happen when people meet friends, relatives or when they have children, move to new communities, etc.

Fourth, listening is a tool of "therapeutic value" (Nichols and Stevens, 1957:31). It is produced when people listen to the music, stories, poetry, drama, etc. Listening makes them relax and put aside all personal worries and cares. It gives much of the enjoyment of the second language learning.

Fifth, listening is used far more than any other single language skill in daily life. For years, many surveys have been done; and the results have indicated it. In the study of selected 68 adults in 1929, Rankin, as quoted by Nichols and Stevens (1957:6), found out that they spent "45% of their time in listening, 30% in speaking, 16%

in reading and 9% in writing". In 1981, Rivers, as quoted by Morley (1991:82), estimated that on the average, people listen twice as much as they speak four times more than they read and five times more than they write. A recent study done by Rubin and Thompson (1994:85) also showed that people spend approximately 60% of their time listening.

In the past, there was not much attention given to the teaching of listening although listening is important especially in the process of learning a second or foreign language. There were two factors that had influenced the reason for the lack of the attention to listening. First, a long standing assumption that listening was a passive skill (Morley, 1984:9, Roach and Wyatt, 1988:3). It occurred because it seemed that listeners were not actively engaged in the process of communication. Listening activity often seemed like merely being there - doing nothing. Second, a long standing assumption that listening was natural (Nichols and Stevens, 1957: 2, Morley, 1984:10). That is why listening was not taught

Fortunately, slowly and steadily, different kinds of attention have been given to listening. Many researches have been done to find out good materials, facilities and theories about how to run the listening class.

Some experts believe that the process of delivering the materials in one meeting is divided into three stages

namely pre-listening stage, whilst-listening stage and post-listening stage (Rixon, 1986:65-73, Underwood, 1989:30-75 and Yagang, 1993:16-18). Therefore, the lesson will proceed in an orderly and productive way (Underwood, 1989:28). In the pre-listening stage, the teacher sets up activities that will become "challenges" for the students. Therefore, they will have a reason for bothering to listen to the materials (Rixon, 1986:64). In the next stage (the whilst-listening stage), the teacher "helps learners to develop the skill of eliciting messages from the spoken language" (Underwood, 1989:45). In the post-listening stage, the teacher applies activities that check the students' comprehension, give reflection on the language of the materials given and transfer things learned to another context (Underwood, 1989:74-77).

Nevertheless, there are some proofs which say that most teachers (if not all) only apply the whilst- and post-listening stages. They often ignore the pre-listening stage. For instance, Sheerin in her study (1987:126) found that most teachers just simply play the tape, ask the students to do the comprehension exercises and give the feedback in the form of "right" answer. Another expert named Yagang (1993:16) also found that most teachers always do those frozen routines. Frankly, the writer herself together with her classmates had the same

experience too.

As there is a gap between the fact and the theory, many students feel anxiety even before they do listening. There is a possibility that they will get low listening proficiency.

In order to help the students as well as the teachers of listening, the writer intends to conduct a library study on the teaching of listening skill. Here, she focuses her attention to the neglected stage, i.e. the pre-listening stage.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the facts stated on the background of the study, this study is intended to answer the following research questions:

- (1). "What are some alternative activities to be done during the pre-listening stage?"
- (2). "What are the advantages of doing activities during the pre-listening stage?"
- (3). "How is the application of the pre-listening activities in the classroom?"

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Derived directly from the research questions above, the objective of this study is to depict:

- (1). Some alternative activities to be done during the pre-listening stage.
- (2). The advantages of doing activities during the pre-listening stage.
- (3). The application of the pre-listening activities in the teaching of listening.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give some valuable contributions to the English Language Teaching especially in teaching listening to the students of the intermediate level. Hopefully, under the guidance of creative and effective teachers who implement this study, the students will achieve their listening proficiency easily.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Realizing that this study is conducted with limited time, energy and funds available, the writer decides to limit the scope of this study. It will only deal with the pre-listening stage in a listening class. This study is directed to the students of English as their second/foreign language who belong to the intermediate level.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the

writer presents the definition of the key terms as follows:

(1). Students with intermediate level of English:

Students who have completed an elementary course of English and have approximately 3,000 words of vocabulary (Milne, 1982:i). In this study, it is assumed that those students are in the first year of English Department of a university.

(2). Listening:

"The process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli" (Wolvin and Coakley, as quoted by Scarcella and Oxford, 1992:138).

1.7 Research Methodology

In carrying this study, the writer does not do a field study. She merely conducts a library study. First, she collects the data and information from any books and articles that are related to her study. Then, she makes use of those information as the basic theory to support her study.

1.8 Organizational Pattern of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of the

the listening skill. Chapter III includes all about the teaching of listening. Chapter IV is about the description of the pre-listening stage. Chapter V deals with the application of the pre-listening stage. Chapter VI summarizes what have been discussed in the previous chapters along with some suggestions.