# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study**

Learning English as a foreign language has become an essential part of our lives since it is the international language which is used by many people in the world. To learn this language, the students need to have the four basic skills, they are speaking, listening, reading and writing. But, in the past L2 researchers considered listening is an ability that could be developed without assistance, and a deep investigation into the history of language learning reveals this lack of attention to the skill of listening (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Morley, 1984; Moyer, 2006; Mendelssohn, 1998; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994).

However, many other researchers conclude that listening is the most important skill for language learning because it is most widely used language skill in normal daily life (Morley, 2001; Rost, 2001), and it develops faster than the three other language skills, which in turn suggests that it can facilitate the emergence of the other language skills (Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, L. Miller (2003) also states that more than forty percent of our daily communication is spent on listening, thirty-five percent on speaking, about sixteen percent on reading, and only nine percent on writing. Yet listening remains one of the least understood processes in language learning in spite of its crucial role in communication and language acquisition.

Listening is a mentally complicated cognitive process including receptive, constructive and interpretive aspects of cognition, which allows a person to understand spoken language (Rost, 2005). This process includes a mental activity on the part of the listener, especially on the part of a second or foreign language (SL/FL) listener. Thus, a focus on the cognitive listening process is urgently required. Process-based approach shows more emphasis on what happens during learner's listening process. It observes the difficulties or breakdowns learners encounter in the process, analyzes the difficulties and finally provides learners with effective

solutions. In this way, learners can solve their listening problems without being left alone to do nothing but listen harder.

Meanwhile in metacognitive, Flavell (1987) proposes a taxonomic categorization of the components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experience. Jausovec (2008) remarks there are two components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive control. Metacognitive knowledge is that part of one's knowledge that refers to cognitive matters (Flavell, 1987; Jausovec, 2008), namely one's knowledge about how one's cognition operates, which consists of knowledge of three variables: person, task and strategy. Metacognitive control "pertains to how one controls one's cognitive operations" (Jausovec, 2008, p. 46). Metacognitive knowledge and control do not operate independently but are mutually influenced. As has been mentioned, metacognitive strategy, one of the three variables of metacognitive knowledge, refers to knowledge about cognitive strategies use and cognitive procedures in pursuing a certain goal. It involves "planning learning, monitoring the process of learning, and evaluating how successful a particular strategy is" (Tohidian, 2009, p. 63). With regard to SL/FL acquisition, it pertains to the notion that L2 learners are able to think consciously about how they learn and how successfully they are learning.

Furthermore, listening comprehension  means the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. It was the perception of information and stimuli  received through the ears (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). It will bring confusion and misunderstanding for those who can not comprehend what other people intend to express, especially for foreign language learners.

Meanwhile, the term "listening comprehension" used in the field of language pedagogy is matched in communicative and psycholinguistic research by such expressions as "speech recognition", "speech perception", "speech understanding" and "spoken language understanding". Chastain (1971) defines listening comprehension as the ability to understand

native speech at normal speed in unstructured situations. Morley (1972) defines it as including not only basic auditory discrimination and aural grammar, but also reauditorizing, extracting vital information, remembering it, and relating it, everything that involves processing or mediating between sound and construction of meaning. Neisser (1976) considers listening comprehensionas a temporally extended activity in which the listener continuously develops anticipation for what will come next. According to Goss (1982) and Samuels (1984), listening comprehension is a process in which the listener constructs a meaning out of the information provided by the speaker.

Eventhough those definitions are different to some extent, they basically conclude that listening comprehension is an activity in which listeners employ a variety of mental processes in an effort to comprehend information from oral texts. They focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passage, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge.

The mental processes that are activated by listeners to understand, learn, or to retain new information from utterances are referred to listening comprehension strategies. As White states "Listening strategies are some techniques used by listeners consciously while listening to help understanding and could include making inferences, realizing where misunderstandings have occured, and asking for clarification" (1998).

Meanwhile, Surabaya Merchant Marine Polytechnic is a maritime academy where the students are trained to be professional seafarers because they are prepared to work in the international range. So, they are expected to be able to communicate in the English language. When they are sailing, their vessels will be isolated from the land, and it is often difficult to know what is happening only a short distance away, the things they can do is communicating using several devices in English as the international language.

The vessels' officers on the bridge often need to communicate by VHF radio, with other ships, shore authorities such as Vessel Traffic Services, Port State Control and security inspectors, pilots and vessels servicing the ship, such as tugs and bunkering craft. Short (2006) states that in these circumstances and as required by international regulations governing communication, English is expected to be the medium of communication. It is important that this communication is clear and concise, repetition often being required to overcome the high levels of sound within the ship, radio interference, external wind and sea noise, or lack of understanding by non-English speaking shore authorities or crews of other vessels.

Seafarers need practice in listening to many different types of communication, including formal and informal 'face-to-face' conversations, conversations including more than two people, VHF radio communications, telephone conversations, presentations, travel announcements, and radio reports (IMO model Course 3.17: 100). That is the reason why they need to have the listening skill and to achieve this they must apply the appropriate listening strategy during their study in this academy.

Therefore, to acquire this skill they need to know and use some listening strategies such as cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies. This is based on Goh (2002) research which reveals that more proficient listeners use both cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies to achieve a meaningful interpretation of a text, and demonstrate the ability to use prior knowledge, linguistic cues, and contextual information while less proficient listeners are often distracted by unfamiliar lexis or expressions, and has a limited range of strategies.

Furthermore, several studies have focused on metacognitive listening strategies. One of them is Vandergrift (2003) who examines the types of strategies and the difference in strategy used by more-skilled and less-skilled listeners concludes that more-skilled listeners use more metacognitive listening strategies than less-skilled listeners do.

In measuring their listening ability, TOEIC is used in this academy. TOEIC is the Test of English for International Communication which is designed to test the ability to understand English as it is used in international business and other professional situations (Rymniak, 1997). The TOEIC covers two main areas: the ability to understand real-life conversations in English, and the ability to read materials in English, such as manuals, reports, advertisements, periodicals.

Therefore many companies consider TOEIC test benchmark scores during the application process. English Testing Service has published functional descriptions for tspecific TOEIC score-bands (TOEIC Examinee Handbook 1996; TOEIC Can-Do Guide 1998; TOEIC UserGuide 1999), which are accepted by various companies (Tenth TOEIC Client Survey 1999). However, ETS does recommend establishing benchmarks according to individual company needs (TOEIC UserGuide 1999). Universities also adopt these descriptions to establish students' goals, creating a high-stakes situation for the learners and arguably inappropriately using the test.

That is why the students of Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya has to gain minimum score of 400 since some foreign shipping companies require this as one of their qualifications before they accept the students to join them as the cadets on board.

**Statement of the Problems**

This study attempts to answer these following questions:

1. Do the students work with metacognitive listening strategies achieve better English listening comprehension than those who work with cognitive listening strategies?

2. Do metacognitive listening strategies give different effects on the English listening comprehension of students in upper-level and lower-level group compared with cognitive listening strategies?

**Objectives of the Study**

This study intends to investigate whether the English listening strategies used are related with listening comprehension and to see whether or not the application of both metacognitive and cognitive listening strategies would produce higher achievement scores. A major goal is to determine which strategy is best used in acquiring the listening comprehension and achieving high score in TOEIC.

**Theoretical Framework**

Related to the listening comprehension in important examinatios such as university entrance test, school exams, and other standardized examinations such as TOEFL and TOEIC, Richards (2005) point out that listening ability has become an important acknowledgment of second language proficiency in comparison with speaking, reading, and writing.

Moreover, in recent decades, several studies have begun to borrow two well-known theoretical models of language understanding and comprehension from the field of second and foreign language listening (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Peterson, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Those theoretical models referred to this study are top-down processing and bottom up processing in comprehension. Listeners use top-down processes when they use context and prior knowledge (topic, genre, culture, and other schema knowledge in long-term memory) to build a conceptual framework for comprehension. Listeners use bottom-up processes when they construct meaning by accretion, gradually combining increasingly larger units of meaning from the phoneme-level up to discourse-level features.

Furthermore, Goh (1998) describes two kinds of listening strategies in her research results. They are cognitive and metacognitive. She states that "cognitive strategies are inference, elaboration and prediction, which are included in top down processing,

contextualization, fixation and finally reconstruction". She also reports that when inferencing, listeners fill in missing information, such as the meaning of unfamiliar words and parts of a text that they cannot hear clearly. While classification, it is as the process by which listeners embellish an interpretation with details to make it more meaningful to them. Prediction enables listeners to anticipate the next part of a text, such as a word, a phrase or an idea. The last strategy in Goh's (1998) classification is contextualization, that is, the attempt to relate new information to a wider context or situation in order to produce an acceptable general interpretation.

Meanwhile, about metacognitive strategies, Goh (1998) also describes that these strategies are selective attention, directed attention, comprehension monitoring, real-time assessment of input and lastly comprehension evaluation. Selective attention means paying attention to specific aspects of the input. Directed attention is concentrating on the input and avoiding distraction. It is important to note that selective attention is different from directed attention, which only focuses on specific aspects of the listening texts.

**The Hypothesis**

There are two hypotheses which this study wants to reveal:

1. The students work with metacognitive listening strategies achieve better English listening comprehension than those who work with cognitive listening strategies.
2. Metacognitive listening strategies give different effects on the English listening comprehension of students in upper-level and lower-level group.

**The Significance of the Study**

The maritime communication requires adequate listening skills to comprehend the essences of the oral messages to assist greater safety at sea.

**The Scope and Limitation**

The study limits English as the Second Language Listening and the subjects are the 60 second- semester students in Deck Department of Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya. Thus this study focuses on the application of the cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies.

**The Definition of Terms**

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| Listening comprehension : | is an activity in which listeners employ a variety of mental processes in an effort to comprehend information from oral texts. |
| Listening strategies: | skills or methods for listeners to directly achieve the purpose of listening comprehension of the spoken input. |
| Cognitive listening strategies: | strategies which are related to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval. They are investigated from the aspects of bottom-up strategies and top-down strategies. |
| Metacognitive listening strategies: | a kind of self-regulated learning. It includes the attempt to plan, check, monitor, select, revise, and evaluate, etc. |
| Upper-level group: | group of participants who gain TOEIC listening score above 200. |
| Lowel-level group: | group of participants who gain TOEIC listening score below 200. |