

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Listening was becoming a significant skill and no longer neglected in the teaching of English in Indonesia after the introduction of the 2004 English Curriculum as well as the establishment of the Standard of Content (Depdiknas, 2006). The implementation of the 2013 English Curriculum also included teaching listening as an integrated skill that should be mastered by students. The students of either senior high school or vocational senior high school have been demanded to master English skills including listening skill in order to pass the National Exams. Therefore, students were taught to practice listening comprehension in the format of TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). They were trained to understand statements best describe the pictures, questions and responses in the dialogue, short conversations and talks.

At the tertiary level of education, the needs of mastering English particularly listening skill, grammar, and reading skill couldn't be repudiated any longer. College students from vocational

education have to achieve 500 TOEIC scores to graduate. It means that they were encouraged to master English skills though they were not studying English as their major in college. The preliminary study conducted through items analysis on TOEIC test for the 6th semester students of Shipbuilding Institute of Polytechnic Surabaya (SHIPS) and the result of their TOEIC scores show that students' weakness was dealing with listening section particularly in short conversations and talks (UPT Bahasa, 2012).

Listening comprehension was found to be among the most difficult tasks for the learners of English for specific purposes due to several reasons. First, most students were not familiar with the listening material produced by native speakers. However, the listening section was not only testing students' listening comprehension but also their understanding of spoken language within grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Thus, students were rarely exposed to the authentic listening materials. Moreover, they usually listen to English without using any learning strategy to cope the difficulties during listening process. Third, listening in ESP was focusing on the specificity or domain content which developed the technical or specialized terms. Nevertheless, the general ability to

listen in the target language (ESL listening competence) would have a greater impact on learners' overall ESP listening performance (Goh in Paltridge, 2013, p. 56).

Goh (2013, p. 58) stated that while undergoing training in ESP listening skills, a learner was likely to be concurrently developing his or her second language listening competence. It involved the same cognitive processes that draw from a number of similar knowledge sources to process spoken input, and required the use of the same core ("macro") skills that enable effective attention to information in accordance with the purpose for listening. Research suggested that the listening problems encountered by learners in both general English and ESP contexts are similar and are linked mainly to factors that influence fundamental cognitive processes, for example: accents, vocabulary and the demands of interactive listening that require quick and appropriate responses.

Dealing with the listening problems encountered by engineering students who learn English for specific purposes at SHIPS, the observation and analysis on the English curriculum and the implementation of teaching English at classrooms have been done to gain a comprehensive overview of teaching English at SHIPS. As a

vocational education, Shipbuilding Institute of Polytechnic Surabaya (SHIPS) has tight learning schedule and more concerns on maritime technology studies. English was only a minor subject in this institution. English Subject was only learned in a very limited time by the first and second semester students of Diploma 3 Study Programs: Design and Construction Engineering (DC), Shipbuilding Engineering (SB), Marine Engineering (ME), Marine Electrical Engineering (MEE). Whereas for students of Diploma 4 Study Programs: Design Manufacture Engineering (DM), Welding Engineering (WE), Piping Engineering (PE), Automation Engineering (OE), Business Management (BM), and Waste Management (WM), English Subject must be taken in the first, second and also last (eighth) semester to support achieving 500 TOEIC Score as graduation requirement. While the students of other Diploma 4 Study Program i.e. Occupational Health and Safety Engineering (OHSE) get extra English learning. English I, II, III and advanced English were given to them.

Therefore, the unbalanced portion of English teaching and learning at the end of 2013 in the curriculum of English teaching at SHIPS was reviewed and improved in accordance with the demand of

KKNI to create graduate who fulfill qualification or *learning outcomes* based on the level (Presidential Regulation No. 8 Year 2012). Thus, English teaching for students of Diploma 3 Study Programs was then given in the first, second and also last (sixth) semester besides the TOEIC preparation course program. Nevertheless, the focus of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) at SHIPS mainly concerned to improve students' communicative skill particularly speaking and reading comprehension on maritime passages and instruction manuals.

In fact, graduates from SHIPS were demanded to master an active communication skills in both written and spoken English. At the conference of Industrial Advisory Board with SHIPS held at 18 June 2008, Ir. Novianto Herbandi, a director of General Engineering and Maintenance from PT PAL Indonesia highlighted the urgency of English communication skill since we might face not only the local owners but also the foreign owners, thus the graduates must master English which is practically important for communication. The importance of English competence was also mentioned by Ir. Joeswanto K., the main director of Jasa Marina Semarang. He stated that HRD, management, and English proficiency were prominent in

order to fulfill the qualification which was well recognized by international market. Dealing with the qualification of SHIPS, Sutarno, a representative of PT Meco Inoxprima Surabaya stated that the quality of SHIPS academic graduates was good in technical knowledge and skill, nevertheless their weakness was commonly dealing with English communication since they need to improve their English competence while communicating with clients from abroad at workplace and project meeting.

These inputs from Industrial Advisory Board inspired all management and English lecturers to improve the curriculum of English teaching and further encouraged the researcher to help students to cope their difficulties in learning English by mapping students' language learning strategies to figure out the effective learning strategies employed by engineering students to improve their listening comprehension. The result of this research is beneficial as a prominent step to analyse students' learning strategies and provide comprehensive feedback for English teachers to implement the best and effective learning strategies in teaching listening comprehension at the classrooms as pedagogical implication.

At the real ESP classroom, teachers tend to test students' listening comprehension while they are teaching listening, thus students often feel anxious and confused what to do with the listening tasks. Moreover, many students were not aware that they have to use specific learning strategy relevant to their learning style to be successful in learning a language particularly listening. They only learn English by doing assignments mostly on grammar and speaking tasks given by the teachers. Thus, they were not completely engaged in integrated English skills since listening comprehension was rarely exposed to them.

However, English teachers should make students aware of the specific learning strategies and encourage them to apply those strategies in optimizing their English competence and listening comprehension. Thus, the researcher believed that by analyzing students' use of learning strategies through Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Questionnaire (Oxford, 1990, p. 293-296), English teacher can assist and engage students to apply learning strategy in order to smartly gain a better listening comprehension as well as able to monitor their own comprehension and overall listening development.

This belief was relevant to Chamot's reviews (1999) that in addition to knowledge and skills, L2 listeners also need to engage in meta-cognitive processes that include strategies for facilitating comprehension and coping with listening difficulties. Listening strategies are effortful and conscious behaviors, and they play important roles in facilitating listening comprehension and thoroughly listening development. Therefore, this research was designated to examine theories of the effect of language learning strategies on improving learners' listening comprehension.

The previous related studies conducted by Sawaka Kato (2005), Bidabadi and Yamat (2011), and Ahmad Al-Alwan, et.al (2013) revealed the significant positive correlation between metacognitive learning strategies and students' English proficiency in general and particularly listening proficiency. The findings of those researches recommended that metacognitive strategies awareness should be emphasized in listening comprehension instruction. The ex post facto study in Indonesian ELT research context revealed the significant difference between successful and unsuccessful learners in using cognitive and social strategies and figure out that the most effective learning strategy in listening skill is meta-cognitive strategy

(M. Reza Febrian, et.al (2014). Thus, a further research investigating the effect of language learning strategies on students' listening comprehension is required to prove the effectiveness of learning strategies on improving their listening proficiency.

Christine M. Goh in *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes* (2013, p. 72) highlighted that there is only limited information on how ESP listeners engage in metacognitive processes and how these processes affect their listening comprehension in turn. The fundamental importance of cognitive processing in listening has been well proven, thus she expects that metacognitive processes have the same impact on ESP listening comprehension. Then, this research is required to verify this claim.

Conducting research on the importance of language learning strategies particularly metacognitive approach to improve listening comprehension is crucial for both teacher and students, thus teacher can develop metacognitive instruction within pedagogical procedures that enable learners to increase awareness of the listening process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the nature and demands of listening, and strategies for listening (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012 p. 97). Furthermore, the

importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings can't be neglected. It is evident that listening plays a significant role in the lives of students since listening is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education.

Therefore, this research project was equally paramount to improve English oral communication skills because the most required ability in every day communication is skill of listening. Ability to understand what speakers in a foreign language uttered and respond appropriately needs to be taught like all other language skills. Thus, this study was essential to provide students more comprehensible input in aural language and urge them to apply the learning strategy to cope their listening problems. This research was further expected to encourage students to be independent learners by applying learning strategies in autonomous learning in the real life communication and extensive listening outside English classroom through internet learning resources providing abundant rich English listening exposures dealing with maritime technology study such as youtube.

Nevertheless, in ELT journal Renandya and Farrell (2011) pointed out that listening strategy might not work with lower proficiency learners of English, who still struggle with basic decoding

skills or word recognition problems. He proposed an alternative solution dealing with lower English proficiency learners by encouraging extensive listening regarding the importance of comprehensible input in boosting listening skill. Therefore in this research, a variety of real world listening materials relevant to their educational background was provided in measuring and improving their listening comprehension as well. These real world listening materials are supposed to be an authentic material for extensive listening which promoted autonomous learners through comprehensible input and constant practices in order to enhance their listening comprehension.

The Research Questions

The study attempted to find out the effect of language learning strategies on engineering students' listening comprehension.

The research questions were formulated as follow:

1. Is there correlation between language learning strategies and engineering students' listening comprehension?
2. Do language learning strategies employed by engineering students affect their listening comprehension?

3. Which of language learning strategies have the most significant effects on improving engineering students' listening comprehension?

The Purposes of the Study

In accordance with the problem stated above, this research was designed to achieve these objectives as follow:

1. To find out the correlation between language learning strategies and students' listening comprehension.
2. To examine the effect of language learning strategies on students' listening comprehension.
3. To figure out the most effective language learning strategies which facilitate engineering students to improve their listening comprehension.

Theoretical Framework

Metacognitive knowledge can potentially heighten learners' awareness of their listening and learning process and develop learners' ability to use appropriate strategies. Goh (2008: 195) inferred that research into metacognitive awareness about listening is

still relatively new. Nevertheless, findings to date show that language learners demonstrate some degree of metacognitive knowledge about themselves as L2 listeners and the listening process (Goh, 1997).

How does learners' metacognitive knowledge about listening influence the outcome of their listening comprehension? One way in which this is possible is that it influences the manner in which learners approach the task of listening and learning to listen. Learners who have appropriate task knowledge about listening may plan, monitor and evaluate what they do, compared with those who approach listening in a random or incidental manner.

There was further evidence to suggest that language learners who were aware of the benefits of some listening strategies may also use these strategies to improve their listening comprehension during communication (Zhang and Goh, 2006). Learners who were conscious of their own listening problems may also be motivated to find ways of addressing them.

Studies on the differences between more skilled and less skilled listeners by Goh (2000, 2002a), Mareschal (2002) and Vandergrift (2003b) have produced some useful insights. The findings of Goh, Mareschal, and Vandergrift highlighted the importance of the

effective use of metacognitive strategies for successful listening comprehension. In a study of adolescent learners of French, Vandergrift (2003b) found significant quantitative differences for four strategies: (1) total metacognitive strategy use, (2) comprehension monitoring, (3) questioning elaboration (flexibility in considering various possibilities before deciding on a framework for interpretation), and (4) online translation (by the less skilled listener).

Recent literature on listening instruction indicated a greater interest in raising students' awareness of the process of listening (Mendelsohn, 2001). A process approach can help students learn how to listen, guiding them through the stages that seem to characterize real life listening (Field, 2001; Goh, 2002b; Vandergrift, 2003a). Using this approach, teachers can help beginning-level students learn how to comprehend short, authentic texts on topics related to student level and interest (e.g., announcements and advertisements). The metacognitive strategies underlying this approach help listeners become more aware of how they can use what they already know to fill gaps in their understanding. Nevertheless, the relative effects of this approach on actual student achievement in listening, particularly

with beginning-level listeners, need to be empirically investigated in carefully designed studies.

Findings from the small number of studies reviewed here indicate that metacognitive instruction in listening can be beneficial in at least three ways: (1) It improves effect in listening, helping learners to be more confident, more motivated and less anxious; (2) It has a positive effect on listening performance; (3) Weak listeners potentially benefit the greatest from it. Clearly, more needs to be done to investigate the role of metacognitive knowledge and examine factors that influence the effectiveness of such an approach.

Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of terms found in this study, the key terms were defined as follows:

1. **Listening comprehension** is an active process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and/or visual clues that involves making sense of spoken language, with the help of our relevant prior knowledge and the context in which we are listening.

2. **Language learning strategies** are a detailed plan or technique that learners use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language in order to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more effective.
3. **Memory strategy** is a technique that learners use for retrieving information to develop their language proficiency by creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action.
4. **Cognitive strategy** is a technique that learners use to develop their language proficiency by practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input or output.
5. **Compensation strategy** is a technique that learners use to develop comprehension and develop their language proficiency by guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in either receptive or productive skills.
6. **Metacognitive strategy** is a technique that learners use to develop their language proficiency by centering their learning,

arranging and planning their learning, and evaluating their learning.

7. **Affective strategy** is a technique that learners use to develop their language proficiency by regulating their emotion, motivation and attitudes, lowering their anxiety, and encouraging themselves.
8. **Social strategy** is a technique that learners use to develop their language proficiency through communication with other people by asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.
9. **Engineering students** in this research are students at the tertiary level of vocational education majoring in maritime studies who study at Shipbuilding Institute of Polytechnic Surabaya (SHIPS).

Significance of the Study

This study was targeted to investigate the impact of language learning strategies on engineering students' listening comprehension. Thus, theoretically the findings of the research were expected to verify the claim that metacognitive processes reflected by language

learning strategies have the same impact on ESP listening comprehension as cognitive processing in listening.

Practically, the finding of this research would give benefit to English teachers in collaborating the students' learning strategies to cope with their listening difficulties. The research would provide feedback for English teachers to develop approaches and implement the best and effective learning strategies in teaching listening comprehension at the classrooms as pedagogical implication. The result of this research was also expected to urge students to apply language learning strategies in the classroom and further develop learning strategies outside English classroom to be autonomous or independent learners. Since, students recently can be directed to employ extensive listening through abundant access to the learning resources from internet and practice to apply the learning strategies as well.

Assumptions

In this study, a set of assumptions designed to ultimately deepen the understanding of listening comprehension related to learning strategies was presented. It was believed that many students

could not comprehend the listening tasks better because the teacher did not provide a technique or strategy to help them in improving their listening comprehension. The students would be able to comprehend the listening tasks in English for specific purposes (ESP) dealing with academic proficiency which includes competence in the use of strategies that aid in the acquisition of academic language and that aid in subject-matter learning. Using these strategies does not guarantee success, but they can have a powerful effect on both language development and learning subject matter.

There are some models of language learning strategy questionnaires, among them are Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Questionnaire (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990), Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) proposed by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari (2006, p. 431-62), Language Learning Strategy Classification (LLSC) Questionnaire (Rubin, 1975), Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) Questionnaire, etc.

Despite the various kinds of questionnaires, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Questionnaire was assumed as the more efficient way to measure and identify engineering

students' learning strategy use in improving their listening comprehension. Since it is a structured questionnaire, aiming to assess how often learners employ specific language learning strategies. It equips teachers with the strategy profile of their students and uncovers to learners the kinds of strategies they resort to when learning English as a second or foreign language (Oxford 1990). SILL is approved as "the most comprehensive classification learning strategies to date" (Ellis, 1994, p. 539), and it is the most often used strategy scale around the world at this time.

Delimitation and Limitation

The main objective of the study was directed to find out the effect of language learning strategies on engineering students' listening comprehension by distributing SILL Questionnaire and analyzing their learning strategies use. Thus, the emphasis of this research lied on the learning strategies applied by students to improve their listening comprehension. The impact of language learning strategies on proficiencies of other language skills such as reading comprehension, communicative competence and writing performance was not covered in this study.