

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

English has become a very important international language in education, technology, and global communication. The ability to use English is not limited to speaking and writing, but also includes receptive skills such as reading and listening. Among the four language skills, listening is often considered the most challenging skill, both for students and teachers. This is because listening skills require concentration, processing speed, and the ability to understand the meaning of sounds that occur quickly and briefly.

Listening is a receptive skill that is first acquired in the process of language acquisition. In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), listening becomes the main key to understanding the structure and context of speech. This skill is not only important as a foundation for mastering speaking skills, but also plays a role in improving reading and writing comprehension.

The problem that arises at the secondary school level is the low ability of students to grasp the meaning of English sentences orally. Many students have difficulty recognizing the sounds of words, understanding intonation, and distinguishing between words that sound similar. This condition poses a particular challenge for teachers, as even though students have become

accustomed to grammar and reading lessons, there is often a gap between their knowledge and receptive skills when faced with listening material.

This difficulty is further exacerbated by the limited exposure to authentic spoken English, resulting in students still facing obstacles in understanding listening material. In fact, listening skills are not just about the activity of hearing, but also a cognitive process that requires quick, accurate, and automatic information processing in real-time.

From the problem faced, teachers need to make active and reflective efforts to learn and implement approaches, techniques, methods, or learning media that can facilitate the teaching process and, at the same time, overcome the obstacles faced by students in learning English listening. Teachers are not only tasked with presenting material but also acting as learning facilitators who are responsive to student needs and difficulties. Therefore, mastery of varied teaching methods is crucial.

One approach to assessing listening skills is the dictation. According to Chang & Chang (2014) Dictation is a commonly used way to assess L2 learners' listening difficulties. In a dictation task, students are asked to write down complete sentences or fill in the blanks. The use of this technique in listening activities aims to increase the accuracy of understanding. Through dictation, students are trained to listen carefully and accurately reproduce the information in written form.

The dictation has been used for many years and has proven effective in developing students' grammar, orthography, and syntax competencies. As

noted by Newton & Nation (2021), Dictation supports language acquisition by reinforcing the connection between sounds and their written forms, therefore enhancing spelling accuracy, grammatical awareness, and sentence structure mastery. The technique requires students to convert auditory input into written output accurately, thus strengthening overall language skills.

Based on the preliminary observations at MAS Al Falah Padang, it appears that most of the XI grade students are still facing difficulties in understanding listening by the teacher. This difficulty is reflected in their low scores in listening tests and the numerous mistakes made when they are asked to rewrite sentences according to what they hear. This phenomenon indicates that students' listening skills have not developed optimally.

Although there are now many modern methods to measure listening skills with the help of technology, the researcher chose dictation because it can assess students' skills more comprehensively. In this test, students must listen to the sounds of the language, understand the sentence structure, and then write it down accurately. Furthermore, dictation remains relevant in the context of secondary schools, especially in educational environments with limited technological facilities, due to its simplicity, low cost, and it still provides valid data about students' listening skills.

Based on the previous background, this study aims to find out how students' listening skills are measured through sentence dictation. The results can provide specific explanations about how the students' listening

skills when assessed using sentence dictation, which parts of the students make mistakes, and identify factors that affect their understanding of listening skills. With the problems described above, the authors are interested in these problems and discuss research with the title “*An Analysis of Students’ Listening Skills through Sentence Dictation*”.

B. Focus of the Study

Based on the background described, this study focuses on measuring students’ listening skills through sentence dictation and the difficulties in participating in the context of dictation activities in XI grade at MAS Al-Falah.

Dictation is chosen as a form of assessment to directly measure how students' listening skills and their ability to transform oral input into correct written form, which requires careful and responsive listening skills.

C. Formulation of the Problems

This study was conducted to analyze students' listening skills using sentence dictation activities. Therefore, the following two research questions guided this study:

1. How are the listening skills of the XI-grade students of MAS Al Falah Padang assessed through sentence dictation?
2. What are the difficulties that students face when participating in a sentence dictation?

D. Purpose of the Study

Based on the above problem questions, this study aims to investigate:

1. To assess students' listening skills through sentence dictation in MAS Al-Falah Padang.
2. To find out the difficulties faced by students when participating in dictation activities.

E. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, listening is a crucial skill in EFL, yet dictation as an assessment tool is rarely applied in classrooms. Therefore, this study is significant in providing new insights into how sentence dictation can be used to assess students' listening skills. In addition, by using a qualitative approach, this research contributes to the analysis of the listening learning process through dictation. The findings of this study can serve as an academic reference to develop more effective learning models, tailored to students' contexts and focusing on their learning experiences.

Practically, this research provided direct benefits for various parties involved in the English learning process. For teachers, this research can be an evaluation material to review the effectiveness of listening learning methods used so far, especially in the application of dictation techniques. For students, the results of this study are expected to increase awareness of the importance of listening skills as a major component in mastering English and encourage them to be more active in developing appropriate learning strategies in dealing with listening activities. And then for the researcher,

this study can serve as an important reference for the development of further research in the field of English language teaching.

