Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter presents several points and related to the topic of the study. This chapter aims to explore students’ strategies to improve listening skill in English Language Department in the private university in Yogyakarta. The researcher puts some theories to discuss some important points of the topic. The points explain about the definition of English listening skill, listening process, barrier during listening process, and listening strategies.

Listening Skill

Listening is a crucial skill for learning language because listening can facilitate students to acquire information and communicate to others. There are four main skills for learning language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening triggers language acquisition beside other skills. Listening delivers input for learning language (Nunan, 2002). By listening to words first, students are able to communicate to others. In addition, Brownell (2015) mentioned several reasons of the impact of listening if one attempted to improve listening namely, it helps to accomplish task, develop relationship, and appreciate what one heard. Listening is a crucial skill before speaking skill.

Anderson and Lynch (1988) stated that successful listening is not only understanding the situation based on the speaker says, it is crucial for the listener to process the information, by stimulate various types of knowledge, applying, and understand the meaning of what the speaker said. O’ Malley, Chamot, Kupper
(1989) explained that “listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement” (p.434)

Listening skill is crucial skill that every language learner should be mastered. In these theories, listening helps students to acquire input from speaker and to understand spoken message through hearing. Also, listening helps students to process information based on context and their background knowledge. Before listener receives input from speaker, listening processes are included.

**Listening Processes**

Listening is a crucial and part of the skills of learning language. When students are listening to the speaker, it involves listening process. Scholars examine the process of listening. According to Brown (2008), listening that human receives from their environment will be caught by sensory memory, where those several of listening inputs will be processed into short-term memory, which is being forgotten if information is not repeated. If the information is repeated several times, the information will move into long-term memory. Rost (2013) adds that listening process is including the neurological, linguistic, semantic, pragmatic, and automatic processing listening to acquire language.

In listening comprehension process, based on the theory from Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), there are three processes; Bottom-up process, top-down process, and interactive process.
**Bottom-up process.** Bottom-up is a process to understand spoken language by analyzing the sounds level. It means that listening where the input comes will be analyzed by the sound in order to understand whole text. Thus, students use their linguistics knowledge in order to be able to construct meaningful text. In the order hand, the scholars pointed that Bottom-up have disadvantage. Students’ understanding depends on the students’ linguistics knowledge. If students failed in processing input because of their lack of linguistic knowledge, they failed to acquire information.

**Top-down process.** Top-down process requires students’ prior knowledge in order to understand the message that they listen (Carell & Eisterhold, 1983; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). By using the background knowledge, students can connect input with their prior knowledge, process input into information, and then students understand spoken language. However, the scholars also pointed out that Top-down process will be useless if the students have no prior knowledge on what they heard or listen. It makes information delivered ineffectively because students hardly understand the spoken language.

**Interactive process.** This process deals with disadvantages of both Bottom-up process and Top-down process as interactive process is a combination between both of those processes. This process makes listening easier to understand. Students enable to predict upcoming input if information is familiar to them. From cognitive perspective, Anderson (1985) stated that students employ three steps of listening comprehension process; perception, parsing, and utilization. Vandergrift (2004) stated that in the perception stage, students
recognize sounds level, gaps, and stress of the language in what they listen and remember the sound in working memory. Thus, the input will be encoded using existed information and new information. The second step is parsing. Parsing is a stage where students trigger their memory in long-term memory in order to get meaning of words. It needs students’ language knowledge to portray information (Anderson, 1985; Kurita, 2012). Thus, students will be able to get meaning syntactically, semantically, and phonologically (Vandergrift, 2004). Utilization process involves one’s prior knowledge. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) pointed out “connections between the new input meaning and existing knowledge occur through which knowledge in long-term memory is activated so that it is connected with the new meanings in short-term memory” (p. 1672).

However, some of these students reported that listening is a challenging skill to be obtained. Listening is challenging because there are problems that students face during listening process. Problems that students face can be various.

**Barriers during Listening**

Listening has important role for language acquisition. Listening is not about how to listen, but also how to cultivate the information from what they heard. Particularly for English Foreign Language (EFL) students, listening skill seems a challenging skill. There are various problems that EFL students face during listening process. Yilmaz and Yavuz (2015) reported the biggest obstacle in listening is phonetics. Hamouda (2013) showed the listening problems encountered by freshmen English major students of Qassim University, such as;
the accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar accent of the speaker, less of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording, an influence their listening comprehension. Goh (2000) reported ten problems arise during cognitive processing phases of perception, parsing, and utilization, other five problems were related to recognition ability and lack of attention during input.

Another study about listening comprehension problems has been reported by Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian, and Nimiehchisalem (2015). In their findings, they reported that Iranian students were also experiencing difficulties in listening. The problems were experienced by students moderate to higher level in perception, parsing, and utilization. The major problems that students experienced were difficulties in hearing sound and words related to perception, lack of concentration and a number of difficulties during parsing, and confusion with main idea in utilization. Furthermore, those students were suffered in three phases of listening comprehension. Rajab and Nimiehchisalem (2016) added that Kurdish EFL learners were facing the major listening comprehension problems. The problems such as difficulties of accents, which way the words are pronounced, text length, and rapidness of speaker’s speech in input problems, and unclear sound related to content problems.

Based on the scholars’ findings above, the conclusion is there are difficulties during listening process. The barrier can be occurred because of various factors. The difficulties come with solution towards the problems that
students faced. Some students are aware to these problems. These students try to solve and design their own strategy to overcome with the difficulties.

**Listening Strategies**

There are some strategies to improve listening skill. Strategy is a method to manage students in learning and embrace students’ difficulties in learning language. Listening strategies can be broken down by how students are processing the input:

**Metacognitive Strategies.** Goh and Taib (2006) mentioned metacognitive strategies can help students to achieve a meaningful interpretation of the text, showed their prior knowledge, ‘linguistic cues’ and contextual information. Besides, Goh (1998) explained metacognitive strategies adapt selective attention, directed attention, comprehension monitoring, real-time assessment, and comprehension evaluation. Oxford (2003) added that “(e.g. Identifying one’s own learning style needs, planning for language task, monitoring their mistakes during learning, and evaluating learning strategy used) are employed for managing the learning process overall”. (p.12). Cross and Vandergrift (2018) also stated that metacognitive strategies can help students to comprehend what students heard by employing metacognitive processes which are planning, monitoring, problem-solving and evaluating. Planning process is how students solve the problem, and planning to figure out their problem by using their own best way, so they can achieve solution toward problem they face (Oxford, 2003; Cross & Vandergrift, 2018). Example strategies of planning process that students may employ namely,

Monitoring is the next process of metacognitive strategy. Cross and Vandergrift (2018) and Oxford (2003) mentioned that in this process, students use double-checking in order to ensure their understanding and avoid mistakes. The problem-solving process is used by students to identify problem and reckon with problem in order to understand what they heard, for example by think and act to solve their problem, check one’s understanding, relate sounds, and double-checking through second attempt of listening (O’ Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 2018). The next process is evaluating process. In this process, students are previewing applied strategy judging their understanding toward their listening approach (Chamot & O’ Malley, 1987; O’ Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Abdalhamid (2012) analyzed two of metacognitive strategies. The first strategies is paying attention to what the speaker said without any distraction. For example, the listener is listening to the radio, participating in class discussion, watching TV, or interacting to other speakers. The second is deciding which one to be payed attention. For example, some students decide to paying attention to the accents and pronunciation in order to understand the whole sentence in accents.

**Cognitive Strategies.** In cognitive strategies, students are using inference which means that students fill in missing information, for example unfamiliar...
words and parts of text of meaning that they cannot hear clearly (Goh, 1998). Then, students are using explanations to bridge the information that they get with their prior knowledge (Vandergrift & Cross, 2018a). This is a process to make students cope with and ease learning knowledge (Azmi, Celik, Yidliz, & Tugrul, 2014). In addition, students can predict their listening in order to anticipate the words, phrases, or idea that they have heard. There are two kinds of cognitive strategies: Top-down strategies and Bottom-up strategies. Ascough (2007) elaborate students can use Top-down strategies to process the input. The scholar stated that top-down strategy is listener based. It means this method triggers students’ prior knowledge in language such as the context, the topic, and the kinds of text while processing the input. The scholar gave in detail about what is included in Top-down strategies; paying attention to the main idea, predicting, designing their assumption, and concluding the input.

In the other hands, there is Bottom-up strategies that more a text based. It means that the listener tries to process the language in the message or text based which are the sounds, words, and grammar included. The product of this strategy is the meaning (Ascough, 2007). Also, the scholar included what is kinds of bottom-up strategy; listen to detail only, and recognize that related to the input and structure of sentence. Cognitive strategies use elaboration that give students a chance to fill missing information by guessing the meaning of unfamiliar word, and gathering their prior knowledge in order to complete information (Vandergrift & Cross, 2018a). The example of cognitive strategies is connect their language knowledge to target language in order to understand words, attempt to understand
without translating, note-taking, visualize their memory of information, repeat word while listening, skimming, bring memory to specific situation, and summarizing, using dictionary (O’ Malley & Chamot, 1990; Abdalhamid, 2012).

**Socioaffective Strategies.** Socioaffective strategies help students to learn by context, the feeling toward the speaker, and manage their motivation and attitude by interacting with others (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 2003). Socioaffective strategies based on Vandergrift and Cross (2018b) is used in social situation. The scholars added that these strategies embrace real time situation for students to learn by interacting to other people. In the other hands, they argued that socioaffective can be challenging for students because this strategies is real time situation, they have to manage if they are not sure with their comprehension. Oxford (1990) added the example strategies of socio affective, namely decreasing anxiety, encouraging oneself, becoming aware of person’s emotion during listening, asking question to teacher and cooperating with friends (Oxford, 1990)

**Review of Related Research**

These are previous research related to this research. These scholars discussed students’ strategies especially in improving listening skill. Chen (2009), in the scholar’s research entitled “Listening strategy instruction: Exploring Taiwanese college students’ strategy development”, explores learners’ strategy development through the course of Strategy Instruction (SI). The participants were 31 non-English major who enrolled in an EFL listening course for fourteen weeks. The result provided that students showed significance awareness and
control over their listening strategies. It leads to positive effects for learners’ comprehensive and use of listening strategies.

Zhang (2012)’s research entitled “The impact of Listening Strategies on Listening Comprehension” examined the effectiveness of use language learning strategies towards Foreign Language (FL) learners by studying the effect of strategy training over listening comprehension. The participants were 56 intermediate foreign language learners who in a strategies-based instructional treatment compared with student in regular listening course. The results was found that the use of listening strategies influence significantly to listening comprehension.

Those scholars have similar field as the researcher does. The similarities are both of the scholars in their study talk about listening strategies through students’ perception, and students’ strategies in learning foreign language. Their participants are college students. However, there are the differences between both studies and this research. The differences are the scholars only talked about impact of usage of listening strategies and explore students’ strategies based on strategy instruction. Also, those scholars employ quantitative research design as their research design to gather data. This research focused on students’ experience in designing their own strategies in order to have better listening skill. This research employed qualitative research design and interview as research design and to collect data. However, both of researches can be used to emphasize this research.
Conceptual Framework

In this section, the researcher talks about conceptual framework of this research. The researcher aims to explore students’ listening strategies in improving listening skill. Listening is one of receptive skill, and has a role in learning language. Even listening has a role for students in learning language; some students found that listening is hard to be mastered. This evidence happened in one of private universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Those students faced many problems while listening process. Those problems are phonetic, the accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, lack of vocabulary, less of concentration, anxiety, unclear sound, text length, bad quality of recording, recognition ability, and lack of attention during input (Goh, 2000; Hamouda, 2013; Yilmaz & Yavuz, 2015; Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian, & Nimachisalem, 2015; Rajab & Nimachisalem, 2016).

Those students were experiencing the problems should have strategies to cope with the problems and improve their listening skill in order to achieve goal which is having better listening ability. There are some scholars that discussed about strategies and it broke down into five strategies based on how students are processing input. There are top-down strategy, bottom-up strategy, metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, and socioaffective strategy (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Goh, 1998; Oxford, 2003; Vandergrift, 2003; Ascough, 2007; Goh & Taib, 2006; Abdalhamid, 2012; Azmi, Celik, Yidiz, & Tugrul, 2014; Cross & Vandergrift, 2018; Vandergrift & Cross, 2018; Goh, 2018). The researcher focuses on students’ strategies in those strategies and what they use the most to
improve their listening skill. Thus, the researcher will explore students’ experience in listening and their own designed listening strategies in order to improve listening ability.

figure 1. Conceptual Framework

1. Phonetic
2. Accent
3. Pronunciation
4. Speed of speech
5. Lack of vocabulary
6. Less of concentration
7. Anxiety
8. Unclear sound
9. Text length
10. Bad quality of recording
11. Recognition ability
12. Lack of attention during input

(Goh, 2000; Hamouda, 2013; Yilmaz & Yavuz, 2015; Nowrouzi, Tam, Zarcian, & Nimelchisalem, 2015; Rajab & Nimelchisalem, 2016)