

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the problem**

As an international language, English is used by people to communicate in many fields all over the world. Therefore, in some countries including Indonesia, English is taught to school as a compulsory subject. The objectives of language teaching stress on four language skills, namely; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

According to Krashen (1982) in Yufrizal (2001:63), listening is primary important in second language. Listening is an unseparable part in teaching learning process of English as foreign language (TEFL). Therefore in order to develop students' listening ability, the teaching should concern with all factors involved in teaching learning process, such as the teaching method, classroom management, aids or media and the materials that influence the effect of achieving the goals of English teaching learning process.

In general, listening is considered as a difficult language skill to master. This is because listening involved some aspects of the target language, for example; vocabulary, understanding the sound, grammar, getting the main idea, specific information and reference. Listening is also very important for students to learn since it is one of productive skills, which is frequently used to convey the ideas in

communicating with others. In fact, some students have difficulties in listening comprehension, especially in identifying the main ideas, specific information, inference and vocabulary.

Fisher and Terry (1980:138) proposed that teaching listening is not a simple thing either for elementary or senior high school students. Listening is better introduced as early as possible, because it is the first step of learning a foreign language. It is clear that listening is important in teaching learning activities. But, we often find junior or senior high school students get difficulties in following the process of English teaching learning activity especially in listening. They often get panic when they know that they will face listening class.

It is also supported by Harmer (1991:23) who states that listening can cause problems for students in general. Students also have difficulties in listening because they have not yet been accustomed to voices or sound of English. Moreover, this is also because they have no sufficient vocabulary.

Because of being panic, the students often fail to recognize words or phrases and this makes them miss the next part of the story.

For those situations, it is necessary for English teachers to make listening classes more interesting and motivating so that the students can make progress in listening comprehension. It is a challenge for teachers to make some students interested in a listening class. Just like Nunan (2005) who states that a challenge for the teacher in the listening classroom is to give learners some degree of control over the content of the lesson, and to personalize content so learners are able to get something about task.

There are numerous ways that will make listening become an interesting activity in teaching learning process, for example teaching listening through song, short story, plays, poem, jokes, anecdotes and picture. Based on the problem from the previous explanation above, the researcher has assumption that listening through short story will give the students new vocabularies and it is also as an alternative way of learning besides through songs or pictures. Short stories provide the students with an interesting and motivating class situation that will help the students to learn effectively and improve their listening comprehension.

Stories are effective tools for early language teaching (Malkina, 1995:38). Story is the best vehicle for passing on information. It meets the emotional, cognitive, and psychological demands of children since it is interesting for them. Stories for students listening practice is considered simple story with familiar vocabularies. Charters (1983) define short stories as prose narrative usually involving one connected episode or a sequence of related event. Teaching listening through short stories as listening material not only entertain the students but can also give the message and information to the students from a narrative of human relationship in life.

A good idea for teaching listening is that listening activity must make use of students' prior knowledge in order to improve listening comprehension.

According to Swift (2007:18) teaching listening suggest that people needs a way to make active approach to improve listening ability by focusing on the specific problem that students have planning listening activities to resolve the problem.

The idea of prior knowledge is one part of the cognitive model of language processing. That model says that when people listen or read, they will process the information they hear both of top - down approach and bottom - up approach. The top-down approach sees understanding as starting from the listener's background knowledge of the non-linguistic context and of working down towards the individual sounds. Meanwhile, the bottom-up approach sees comprehension as a matter of listeners first decoding (or understanding) the smallest elements of what they hear the element of the sounds.

According to Wong (2005:4) way of treating the teaching and learning of listening by focusing on how to get main ideas, the gist and the meaning in the listening materials even when it is clear that listener have not been able to identify to identify a lot of the speech sounds is often called the top - down processing.

Therefore the researcher will use top - down approach in this research to encourage the students to listen for overall understanding and to get the gist of the text, or being able to repeat back to the exact words which will be used by the speaker.

Considering the background above, the researcher focuses on teaching short stories to improve students' listening comprehension through top – down approach and to find out which aspects' of listening students make improvement in teaching short stories through top – down approach. Hopefully, by teaching short stories through top - down approach, it would help the students to improve their listening comprehension.

## **B. Problem of the Research**

Considering the background above, the researcher formulates the problem of the research as stated below:

- Is there any significant improvement of students' listening comprehension after being taught short stories through top - down approach?
- In which aspects' of listening students make improvement in teaching short stories through top – down approach?

## **C. Objective of the Research**

Concerning the research problem, the objective of this research is to find out whether there is a significant improvement of students' listening comprehension after being taught short stories through top - down approach and in which aspects' of listening students make improvement in teaching short stories through top – down approach.

## **D. Uses of the Research**

The uses of the research are:

1. Theoretically, verifying previous theories on teaching short stories to improve student listening comprehension by using top - down approach as a reference for the further research.
2. Practically, as a consideration for English teachers to use short stories to improve student listening comprehension by using top - down approach.

### **E. Scope of the Research**

The research was conducted at SMA YP UNILA Bandar Lampung. The population of this research was the eleventh grade students and the researcher and the researcher chooses one class randomly by lottery as the sample. The classes consisted of forty students. The researcher used narrative text as short stories material for the treatment. The reason why the researcher chooses this material is because narrative text is one of the functional texts that should be mastered by students in this level. Moreover, the researcher focused on teaching listening by using short stories through top - down approach.