

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of this present research, statements of problems, aims and significances of the research, the research methodology preview and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

The necessity to acquire foreign language (s) has been fostered by the inevitable requirements to be able to communicate using foreign language (s) for various purposes. In second and foreign language learning field, language learning strategies (LLS) have been one of the central interests as they have been identified holding a key role as a means to enhance the language students' communicative competence and the language learning as a whole.

In Indonesia, in particular, the awareness of becoming proficient in foreign language has encouraged foreign language learning to be considered as one of the important subject to be included in the national curriculum. English as the international language has been established as a compulsory subject learned both formally and informally at every level of education and in education institutions across Indonesia.

With the considerable developments in English teaching and learning in recent years, marked by the emergence and application of a variety of interesting modern teaching and learning methods to enhance the language students' English skills, it is unfortunate to discover the expectation that the students have excellent communicative competences in English has not yet coincided entirely with the real condition of the students' English skills. The

students' skills in English are considered, to certain extent, as unsatisfactory (Alwasilah cf. Frandono 2005, Lengkanawati 2004). Artsiyanti (2002) states that

It is astonishing that students who have studied English for at least 6 years since junior high school, after they graduated from senior high school are still unable to speak well in English, even to introduce themselves. (Translation mine)

In relation to such condition, Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have been discovered as an influential factor underlines the students' success in learning a foreign or second language (Gass and Selinker, 1994). Brown (2000: 60) once proposed that successful mastery of the second language will due to a large extent to a student's own personal "investment" of time, effort, intention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language (also see Palmer and Goetz, 1983; Borkowski et al cf. Palmer and Goetz, 1983). Hence, what the students do and devote for the learning are truly important. In other words, it is not merely where the students learn the language but how the students manage the learning in the ways they can support their language acquisition.

LLS are identified as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that the language students employ to improve their acquisition, internalizing, storing, retrieving, and to use the target language (Oxford 1990: 8). LLS are a study skill which is as important as language knowledge the students need to accomplish the learning goals (Weinstein, Zimmerman and Palmer, 1988: 25). Not only can LLS assist the students in processing information and using the language but it can also lead to independency in learning. LLS aid the students as they are used as tools to control and improve their own learning

efforts (Oxford cf. Vidal 2002). In other words, LLS are keys to a greater autonomy and more meaningful learning. Therefore, language students who are capable of using a wide variety of LLS appropriately can improve their language skills (Fedderholdt cf. Hismanoglu, 2000).

According to Brown (2000) each student has a number of possible ways to solve particular problems and they choose one or several strategies for a given problem. However as Ghani (2003) reports, language students at all levels use strategies but some or most of them are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most helpful to use (see also Nyikos and Oxford, 2003). It can be said that although the students are potential in using LLS, their lack of the ability to recognize appropriate strategies they should use may block them from gaining the learning success.

Furthermore, LLS are also affected by many factors such as motivation, attitudes, gender, age, level of proficiency, cultural background, and nature of the tasks. These factors positively correlate with the use of LLS (Oxford, 1990; Hismanoglu, 2000). Gardner and MacIntyre cited in Tyers (2000) reveal that more motivated students tend to use more strategies than less motivated students. Results in this area are relatively significant and constant. However, what seems to be more concerning is the ways the students actually employ the strategies. Chamot et al. cited in O'Malley and Chamot (1990) reveal that more effective students used greater variety of strategies and used them in ways that helped the students complete the language task successfully while less effective students not only had fewer strategy types in their repertoires but also frequently used strategies that are inappropriate to the task or that did not lead to successful task completion. Slightly different than this finding, it is found that less effective students do

use similar strategies and sometimes even use them as frequent as more successful peers but they use the strategies differently (Chamot and El Dinary, 1999; Khaldieh, 2000; Vandergrift, 1997 cf. Oxford, 2001). These varied findings indicate that when strategies are used differently by different students, various results are generated. Therefore, it is important for students to know different ways of applying strategies so that the strategies used can fit with what the tasks entail.

Based on what have been presented above, researcher of this current research was interested in providing more evidences on the use of LLS through investigating LLS used by the Indonesian EFL university students and finding out the variety of ways of employing the strategies. Moreover, speaking skills have been chosen as the language skill this research focused on. In communication, speech takes place as a dominant and modest way of communication (Adler and Rodman, 1985). Speech links individuals with the society in which the individuals interact. Oral communication in verbal and non-verbal ways enables language users to communicate their thoughts, feelings and information to others within variety of situations. Hence, it is fair to say that English speaking skills are essential to be acquired and developed. However, the complexity speaking skills can be overwhelming in some ways (Harris, 1969; Brown, 1994; Harmer, 2001). The LLS were further investigated under this current research's title "The EFL Students' Strategies in Learning English Speaking Skills".

1.2 Statement of Problem

This research sought for answers to these following questions:

- 1.2.1 What are Language Learning Strategies (LLS) the students employ in learning English speaking skills?
- 1.2.2 In what ways the students employ the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in learning English speaking skills?

1.3 Aims of Study

The aims the researcher would like to accomplish through this study. The aims are:

- 1.3.1 Identifying the variety of students' LLS used in learning English speaking skills
- 1.3.2 Revealing various ways of using LLS the students employ in learning English speaking skills

1.4 Significance of Study

The results of this study are expected to:

- 1.4.1 Present a view on the variety of students' LLS and ways of employing them in learning speaking skills.
- 1.4.2 Encourage the teachers to raise the students' awareness of LLS and to train their students to use appropriate LLS in the right way to support the learning and also prepare various challenging learning tasks which provide changes for the students to practices their LLS.
- 1.4.3 Inform the language students about the EFL university students' LLS. The information can be used and modified by the language

students at all level of education to evaluate and develop their existing LLS and gradually improve their English speaking skills.

1.5 Scope of Study

This study was limited to two primary points concerning the LLS. Firstly, the identification of the wide range of the students' LLS in learning speaking skills and secondly, the identification was expanded to uncover the applications of the LLS. Other aspects besides the main points were not investigated or discussed further.

1.6 Methodology of Research

1.6.1 Research Design

The research applied descriptive design— a design which involves a group of techniques used to determine, describe or examine the current status of phenomenon through describing them explicitly (Tarigan, 1993: 106). The LLS were described and investigated as they are in natural situation as Arikunto (1990: 310) asserts that descriptive research is intended to describe a variable, a symptom, and a situation as they are. This means that neither the respondents nor the LLS were studied with interference of the researcher in the form of treatment or control.

1.6.2 Participant of Study

The participants of this study was 30 forth grade students of English Education Department, Indonesia University of Education. They have followed the battery of compulsory speaking subjects in the department.

Thus, they were assumed to have a wide knowledge about English speaking skills and a number of speaking strategies.

1.6.3 Data Collection Procedures

In collecting the data, self-report survey and interview were employed. The self-report survey was administered in English version and distributed to all the respondents. Meanwhile, the interviews were conducted with the sub-sample. The instruments were as follows:

1.6.3.1 Questionnaire

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.00 for speakers of other language learning English was the questionnaire used as the self-report survey. It was adopted and used to collect the wide range of the students' LLS. The SILL in this current research listed 21 speaking strategies.

1.6.3.2 Interview

Interview was chosen as a means to gather specific information and more personal information from the respondents regarding their LLS. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in group interviews of three and four. The interviews were audio - taped.

1.6.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed through several steps. The steps were:

1.6.4.1 Data organization

The obtained data were organized based on certain categories.

1.6.4.2 Data statistical analysis

The data were statistically analyzed using simple computation of percentage and frequency techniques.

1.6.4.3 Presenting the analysis results

Results generated from the analysis were presented. To clarify the data, the results were also shown in chart and tables.

1.6.4.4 Describing and interpreting the results

The results were described, elaborated and interpreted based on the LLS theories.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

The following are some terms which need to be clarified in order to avoid misinterpretations:

1.7.1 Language learning strategies are strategies in the form of actions and thoughts employed by the student to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information and the comprehension and production of language (Oxford, 1990).

1.7.2 Communicative competence is the underlying system of knowledge and skills required for communication such as knowledge of vocabulary and skills in using the sociolinguistic conventions for given language (Canale and Swain, 1980 cf. Lubis, 1988).

1.7.3 EFL – English as a Foreign Language. EFL refers to the role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but not used as medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication.

1.8 Organization of the Paper

The paper is presented in the following paper organization:

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter presents the research background, statement of problems, aims and of the study, research method, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II Theoretical Foundation

This chapter cites related theories as the basis of the research's investigation and relevant research which are used to support the research investigation.

Chapter III Methodology

This chapter presents the research questions and details about the research design, participants of research, data collection and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses results and findings of the research and analyzes them to answer the research formulated questions.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter presents conclusions of the research and some suggestions for language students and teachers and future research.