CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Language plays an important role in students' intellectual, social, and emotional development and becomes a key determinant in learning all subjects at school. In the 2004 Curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, English is taught to prepare students in achieving some competences that enable students to reflect their experiences, to express ideas and feelings, and to understand various meanings (English Curriculum 2004). It is also stated that senior high school students, at the end of the study, are expected to obtain the literacy level at an informational level, which is indicated by students' ability in accessing knowledge by using the language, and are prepared to survive in college life.

For senior high school students, English is a foreign language. It becomes an obligatory subject to take by senior high school students. In practice, however, it seems to the students that English is difficult and becomes one of the subjects that is feared by students in senior high school. They face the great task of acquiring the target language, especially when they have to speak in the target language. This emphasis on oral aspects of language means that students have to learn to understand what others speak and try to speak out what they want to express in a foreign language class. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) pointed out that speaking in the target language seems to be the most threatening aspect of foreign language learning and the current emphasis on the development of

communicative competence poses particularly great difficulties for the anxious students. Therefore, foreign language anxiety is a significant issue which cannot be ignored to ensure the success of English education in senior high schools.

Anxiety is defined as a state of uneasiness and apprehension or fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening. Spielberger (1966), in Chan & Wu (2004), defines anxiety as "subjective, consciously perceived feelings of apprehension and tension, accompanied by or associated with activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system." It is a kind of troubled feeling in mind. Scovel (1978), in Brown (2001), defined anxiety as "a state of apprehension, a vague fear …". Anxiety is classified into trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety, as Scovel (1978) in Na (2007) noted, refers to "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious" while state and situation-specific anxiety are usually experienced in relation to some particular event or situation (Brown, 2001).

Language anxiety, the research target of this paper, belongs to the last category, which refers to the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). According to Young (1991), there are six potential causes of language anxiety which include personal and interpersonal, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures and language tests. From this list we can see that Young, in fact, identified the causes from three aspects, that is, the aspects of learners, teachers and instructional practice. Three components of

foreign language anxiety have been identified (Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989, 1991c, in Brown, 2001). They are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension arises from learners' inability to adequately express mature thought or ideas, fear of negative social evaluation arises from a learner's need to make a positive social impression of others, and test anxiety is apprehension over academic evaluation. Based on these three components Horwitz et.al. (1986) also designed a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, which includes thirty-three items. This scale was later widely used by researcher to measure foreign language learners' anxiety and examine the effect of anxiety on learning in different contexts.

Anxiety can be either facilitating or debilitating. Facilitating anxiety motivates learners to adopt an approach attitude and is willing to confront the new learning task. Debilitating anxiety motivates learners to assume an avoidance attitude and therefore tends to escape from the learning task (Scovel, 1978). The factor of task difficulty affects learners to develop a facilitating or a debilitating anxiety. MacIntyre (1995) claimed only when a given task is relatively simple, foreign language anxiety could be facilitating. Once the task is too difficult, anxiety will impair performance. In addition to task difficulty, factors such as teachers' attitude and evaluation, teacher-students interactions in class, parents' expectation, classmates' attitude, students' own achievement are the potential sources of students' foreign language anxiety.

Language anxiety has been said by many researchers to influence language learning. Whereas facilitating anxiety produces positive effects on learners'

performance, too much anxiety may cause a poor performance (Scovel, 1991). According to Krashen (1980), anxiety contributes to an affective filter, which prevents students from receiving input, and then language acquisition fails to progress (Horwitz et al., 1991). Affective variables play facilitative role in language acquisition. These variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. He claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition.

Over the past years, there were numerous studies on students' foreign language anxiety, but most of them focused on either college level (Aida, 1994; Ganschow et al., 1994) or high school level (Chang, 1999; Ganschow & Sparks 1996; Liao, 1999). Few of them paid attention to primary school level except the study of Chan and Wu (2000), which showed foreign language anxiety of primary school students in Taiwan.

Several studies of foreign language anxiety in university students have been conducted by some researchers. Cassado and Dereshiwsky (2001) investigated the perceived levels of anxiety experienced by beginning foreign language students in a regular university setting. The result showed that some levels of anxiety were present in beginner classes and that these levels did not decrease after the completion of the second semester of language acquisition. In addition, the study of language anxiety in university students has also been conducted by Kondo and Yang (2004) which examines the strategies that students use to cope with the anxiety they experience in English language classrooms. The

result showed that there were 70 basic tactics for coping with language anxiety that cohered into five strategy category: Preparation, Relaxation, Positive Thinking, Peer Seeking, and Resignation.

The study of language anxiety in senior high school students was accomplished by Na (2007) which explored high school students' English learning anxiety in Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. The results showed that students indeed had comparatively high anxiety in English learning. Males have higher anxiety of English classes than females, and it was also found that high anxiety plays a somewhat debilitative role in high school students' language learning.

In Indonesian context, the study of language anxiety was also accomplished by Sugiharti (2007). The study, which involved 23 college students in English speaking for communication class, showed that anxiety occurred in the level of mildly anxious and mostly occurred in the type of communication apprehension. However, the study of the language anxiety among senior high school students and strategies the students used in coping with the anxiety are quite sparse. These high school students, who at the critical stage of foreign language learning may experience more anxiety in this process, are neglected. This study, therefore, was intended to examine the general situation of high school students' language anxiety, especially among students in Science and Social class in EFL classrooms in Indonesia. Additionally, the strategy they employ in coping with language anxiety will also be discussed.

1.2. The Aims of the Research

Considering the background and the statements of the problems above, the study was aimed at:

1. investigating the perceived levels of anxiety by foreign language students in senior high school.

2. figuring out the sources of students' language anxiety and anxiety-provoking situation among senior high school students.

3. investigating the types of anxiety coping strategies applied by senior high school students.

1.3. Formulation of Problem

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of anxiety perceived by senior high school students?

2. What are the sources of students' language anxiety and anxiety-provoking situation?

3. What strategies do the students apply to cope with the language anxiety?

1.4. The Significance of the Research

The result of the study was intended to have following significance:

1. to find out the levels of anxiety perceived by senior high school students

2. to identify the sources and the situation that may trigger anxiety

3. to present strategies which may be helpful for senior high school students

to cope with the language anxiety.

4. for English teachers, having identified the sources of anxiety in the classroom, they can promote good classroom dynamics, which make the learning environment more relaxed and learner-friendly.

5. to give teachers a framework for evaluating and improving their teaching

1.6. The Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to analyze the language anxiety in senior high school classrooms.

1.7. Research Method

In conducting the study, the researcher used mixed method research. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) mixed methods research is defined as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. It was used to answer research questions in multiple approaches.

1.7.1. Participants

The participants of this study were the second grade of senior high school in SMU 15 Bandung. From several classes available, the researcher used one social class and one science class. The participants were requested to answer the questionnaires. In order to have a further understanding of the students' foreign language anxiety, seven high-anxious students from each class were selected as

the interviewees according to their scores in the questionnaires. In addition, two English teachers were interviewed, too.

1.7.2. Instruments

The instruments used in this study include classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Classroom observation enabled the researcher to observe the process that was investigated in the classroom. It helped the researcher to gain tacit understanding, theory-in-use, and participants' point of view that might not probably be explored by interview or questionnaires. Questionnaires were used to obtain participants' opinion, attitude, or perception on certain phenomena. There were two questionnaires which were employed in the study. The first part of the questionnaire was English Learning Experience Questionnaire designed by the researcher. It was intended to investigate students' general English learning experience, especially those experiences related to learners' English learning anxiety. The second part of the questionnaire was Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was used to investigate senior high school students' foreign language anxiety in English learning. In the FLCAS, there are 33 question items, and a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" (5 points) to "strongly disagree" (1 point). Each anxiety score was gained by summing the ratings of the thirty-three items. The theoretical range of this scale was from 33 to 165. The higher the total points were, the more anxious the student was. In addition, interviews with students and teachers were given to explore the possible sources and anxiety-provoking situations. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted in

Indonesian.

1.8. Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to second grade students in one Social and one Science class. Then, seven high-anxious students from each class were selected as the interviewees according to their scores in the questionnaires. The English teachers were interviewed, too. Besides, the students were asked to write down their strategies when they were anxious in learning English.

1.9. Data Analysis

The questionnaires that showed the level of anxiety in senior high school students were analyzed using Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). In the FLCAS, there were 33 question items and a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" (5 points) to "strongly disagree" (1 point). The higher the total points were, the more anxious the student was. The strategies to cope anxiety were then classified into five categories based on Kondo and Yang's (2004) study - Preparation, Relaxation, Positive Thinking, Peer Seeking, and Resignation

1.10. Clarification of the Key Terms

The term "Foreign language" in this study was referred to English language given in senior high school.

The term "Language anxiety" here referred to language anxiety perceived by foreign language students.

1.11. Organization of the Paper

The research paper was organized as follows:

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter provided the background of the study, limitation of the study, formulation of problems, the aims of the research, the significance of the research, research method, data collection procedure, data analysis, population and sample, clarification of the key terms, and organization of paper.

Chapter II Theoretical Foundation

This chapter consisted of related theories as the basis of investigating the research problems.

Chapter III Research Methodology

This chapter discussed the methodology in conducting the research. It consisted of research method, the data collection technique, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Results and Discussion

This chapter consisted of the writer's interpretation of the results of the research and discussion.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter consisted of the research conclusion and suggestions to other researchers who wished to continue the research.