CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statements of the problem, purposes of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, clarification of the terms of learning strategies and successful EFL learners, and paper organization.

1.1. Background of the Study

Within the field of language education, greater attention has been being put on learners and learning rather than teachers and teaching since many investigations show the importance of language learning strategies (Tseng, 2005). Recognizing and using good language learning strategies are necessary in language learning because language learning strategies "are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which are essential for developing communicative competence" (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). Using the right learning strategies will improve proficiency and self-confidence (Oxford, 1990). The idea is also advocated by some other researchers that good language learning strategies can be very helpful learning tool (O'Malley et al., 1985, in Griffiths, 2004).

However, in practice, not all language learners – in this case, EFL learners – recognize and use good language learning strategies. It can be seen that EFL learners in a class may range from the most successful EFL learners with most excellent scores to the unsuccessful ones. One of the reasons is that they generally

use different strategies while learning English in and or outside classroom. Therefore, no wonder their achievements in EFL learning are different as well. It is assumed that those who are successful use good language learning strategies while those who are unsuccessful may not use them (Brown, 2001; Chamot &Kupper, 1989 in Tercanlioglu, 2004; and Gregersen, et al., 2001).

Consequently, good EFL learning strategies should be recognized and used by EFL learners. By recognizing as well as using good EFL learning strategies, EFL learners may gain success in EFL learning. It is in accordance with Brown (2001) who states that one of the factors contributing to the success of foreign language learning is "the role of the learner in the process" (p. 59) that is recognizing and using good language learning strategies. Those who play their role well by using good learning strategies may gain success while those who do not use them may gain less success.

Furthermore, besides by the learners, good EFL learning strategies should be recognized by EFL teachers because teachers can help students to use strategies more effectively. If EFL teachers recognize the good EFL learning strategies, teachers can introduce them to their students and even teach them (Oxford, 1990 & Brown, 2001). Thus, learners can be encouraged to be autonomous learners because keys to greater autonomy and more meaningful learning are learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Besides introducing and teaching the strategies, teachers can also create situation in classroom in which learners can do the good language learning strategies; or, teachers can give tasks to students so the students

2

do the good language learning strategies outside classroom. This will widen possibility of language learning success to occur.

There are, in fact, many researchers report about good language learning strategies. However, since strategies of successful language learners may differ from one learner to another, one place to another, or from one situation to another, it is still essential to do study pertaining to the issue.

Oxford (1990), in her book entitled "*Language Learning Strategies*", lists fifty (50) learning strategies used in ESL/EFL learning. However, as time is going on, she states, language learning strategies is also developing. Therefore, it is possible that there is any other language strategy has not been listed.

Brown (2001) also mentions fourteen good language learners' strategies that are based on collective observations of teachers and learners. He argues that the fourteen strategies are not all used by all successful language learners. It means that other successful language learners may exhibit some of them and or some others that are not mentioned and revealed. So, there is still a wide chance to figure out other good language learning strategies.

In addition, a pilot study conducted by Gregersen et al. (2001) reports types of strategies used by both successful and unsuccessful language learners which are investigated by using SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) of Oxford (1990). The study suggests that the use of foreign language learning strategies of good (successful) learners differs from poor (unsuccessful) learners and also changes in different ways over time. Like any other studies (Goh, & Foong, 1997; Kyung-Ok, 2003; and Yang, 1997), this study also suggests that the use of

learning strategies can affect learners' proficiency. However, although the strategies used by successful and unsuccessful language learners are investigated, the study does not report specific strategies used by learners.

Another study by Filmore (1982) in Griffith (2004) reports about the time out of class, except time in classroom, that is used by good language learners to communicate with their classmates. And this is indentified, by Rubin (1975) in Griffith (2004), as good language learners' behavior. From this, it is revealed that one of the good language learners' strategies is using time out of class to use the language in communication with friends (classmates).

Relevant to that, a study about out of class language learning conducted by Pearson (2003) reports some activities that are used by language learners outside classroom. They are listening/watching news on radio or television; independent study in a library; reading books, magazines, or newspapers; watching television programs, videos or movies; listening to music or radio; talking with other students; internet research / email / chat; talking with native speakers off-campus; personal writing; having a friend who is native speaker of English; using English at home; and other activities.

Considering the importance of recognizing good language learning strategies for successful language learning, it is necessary to do a study which concerns with learning strategies used by successful EFL learners that are those who gain the best achievement in their own class.

This present study is aimed to discover specific learning strategies used by successful EFL learners in classroom. In addition, like Filmore's study, this

4

present study is also expected to discover specific EFL learning strategies out of class.

In addition to Pearson's study, this present study is projected to describe the activities/strategies in-depth, not only what types of strategy used but also the strategy itself. Furthermore, this present study is intended to discover the most useful strategies for the learners.

In conclusion, this present study is projected to discover specific EFL learning strategies used by successful EFL learners in and outside classroom, and to discover the most useful strategies for the learners.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

With the above background of research, some research questions are formulated as follows:

a. What strategies are used by successful EFL learners in and outside English classroom?

b. What strategies are the most useful for the learners?

1.3. Purposes of the Study

This study is aimed to discover specific EFL learning strategies used by successful EFL learners in and outside classroom, and to discover the most useful strategies for the learners.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The importance of recognizing learning strategies of successful EFL learners could not be neglected. That is because from this study, both teachers and learner will get benefit as they may gain information about good EFL learning strategies.

As noted earlier, by recognizing good EFL learning strategies, teachers can introduce and even teach the strategies to their students. Furthermore, with the information about the strategies, other EFL learners may use strategies that work for them to gain success in EFL learning.

Thus, this study may contribute to the knowledge of EFL learning and teaching.

1.5. Research Methodology

1.5.1. Design

This study employs a case study. In this present study, there are both quantitative and qualitative data; however, this study is dominated by qualitative approach in which hypotheses-generating, rather than hypotheses-testing, is expected. This study is to discover EFL learning strategies used by successful EFL learners and relate them to existing theories rather than to test any theory.

1.5.2. Sample

Since this case study is dominated by qualitative, the most appropriate sampling strategy is purposive sampling as noted by Chein (1981) in Merriam

(1988). Merriam (1988) states that sampling not only deals with people but also researh site, time, and event.

Research site in this study is SMKN 1 Cimahi. This school is chosen because it is cluster-one school and it is considered that cluster-one schools had excellent students with high achievement in many subjects including English. The researcher considered that the school is potential to be studied. Besides, the researcher obtains quite wide access into this school compared to other cluster-one schools.

Meanwhile, people in this study are successful EFL learners who are chosen because of their achievement in English in their own class at the school. There are sixteen classes of third graders. Four successful EFL learners of each class are assigned to be respondents. So, there are 64 respondents.

1.5.3. Data collection

This present study used questionnaire and interview in collecting data. The questionnaire was adapted from Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL) version for speakers of other language learning English developed by Oxford (1990) in 1989 which was translated into Bahasa Indonesia by the researcher in order that respondents could respond it easily.

The questionnaire was distributed to 64 respondents to discover the learning strategies used in and outside classroom, how often they were used, other learning strategies used by respondents in addition to 50 learning strategies

mentioned in questionnaire, and the most useful learning strategies chosen by respondents.

This was also used as stimuli and for the researcher to design and conduct in-depth interview.

The second instrument used in this study was semi-structured interview. The interview was applied to investigate in-depth/specific about how the respondents implemented the most useful strategies.

1.5.4. Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis in this study were simultaneously employed.

When data from questionnaires were completed, the data were analyzed quantitatively. Data entry was conducted from questionnaire to computer that is Excel program. By using the program, data were analyzed to elicit the 10 most and the 10 least frequent learning strategies, other learning strategies added with their frequency, and the most chosen strategies as the most useful strategies.

After analyzing the results of the questionnaire, the second instrument, the interview was conducted.

The interview was transcribed. The transcription was analyzed qualitatively by reading them thoroughly, giving code and sense-making. Color coding was applied to find data relating to or answering the interview questions. Then, reducing unnecessary data was conducted.

Finally, all data gained from the questionnaires and the interview were interpreted and explained to answer research questions one by one.

1.6. Clarification of the Term

a. Learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations" Oxford (1990).

b. Successful EFL learners in this research are those who gain the best achievement in their own class.

1.7. Paper Organization

This paper is organized into 5 chapters as follows:

CHAPTER I discusses the introduction that comprises background of the study, statements of the problem, purposes of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, clarification of the terms of learning strategies and successful EFL learners, and paper organization.

CHAPTER II presents the theoretical foundation of the study that discusses learning strategies and related previous studies.

CHAPTER III discusses research methodology that comprises research design, sample of the study, data collection techniques, and data analysis.

CHAPTER IV discusses the findings and discussions of this present study.

CHAPTER V presents the conclusions and suggestions of this present study.