CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the general idea of the study. It covers the background of the study, research questions, aim of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research method, and organization of the study.

1.1 Background

Any human beings communicate with each other through languages. There is no limitation in learning many languages as long as they are willing to go through the process in order to learn those languages. Thus, after having full knowledge of the first language, there is any possibility for anyone to learn second language for their necessity. There are many reasons why people decide to take a second language to be learned, either it is for one's job or for one's education. Therefore, in this case, a second language is important for many people to achieve a certain goal of their lives because good communication leads to a better life. In addition, it is important to learn a second language in order to survive and compete with others in this era.

The word 'second' in second language refers to any language that is learned subsequent to the mother tongue, whether that is learning third or fourth language (Ellis, 1997, p.3). In other words, second language can be defined as the language in addition to one's first language, although the language may be the third language and so on, to be applied (Saville-Troike, 2006). He (2006) also states that the learning process which is taken by the second language learners can be called second language acquisition.

When it comes to second language or foreign language learning, there is one of many important issues which is frequently investigated by linguistic scholars, that is language aptitude. Language aptitude in the field of linguistic is very similar to language learning ability (Dörnyei, 2005). Aptitude itself can be defined as "capacity that enhances the rate and ease of learning" (Carrol, 1981, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 495). It is likely for second language learners to know how far or

how well their ability when it comes to learning a new language(s) for their necessity.

Carroll & Sapon argues that language aptitude is a "basic abilities that are essential to facilitate foreign language learning" (1959, p. 14). Language aptitude relates to the concept of human abilities and concerns with the differences of second language or foreign language learners' cognitive (Dörnyei, 2005). Therefore, in order to find out language learning success in second language or foreign language which relates to learners' cognitive, there are several language aptitude tests which are used to measure one's ability in learning a new language(s).

The language aptitude tests consist of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) which was developed by Carrol and Sapon in 1956, the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) which was developed by Pimsleur in 1966, the Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language – Foreign Test (CANAL-FT) which was developed in 2000 by Grigorenko, Sternberg, and Ehrman, and many more (Rysiewicz, 2003). However, this study focuses on the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) as the instrument to measure English second language learners' aptitude.

As mentioned above, the Modern Language Aptitude Test was developed in 1956 by John Carrol and Stanley Sapon (Carrol & Sappon, 1959). MLAT is the most well-known aptitude test and still used all over the world for second language acquisition (SLA) research in its original version (Robinson, 1997). Besides in its original version, MLAT is also available in its translated version, for example MLAT in Hungarian version (DeKeyser, 2000).

Carroll and Sapon (1959) divided the Modern Language Aptitude Test into five subtests; they are *Number Learning*, *Phonetic Script/Phonetic Sensitivity, Spelling Clues, Words in Sentences*, and *Paired Associates.* The explanation about the subtests will be delivered in *Chapter II.*

This study, moreover, investigates the correlation of language aptitude and English second language learners' mastery of conditional sentences. Their language aptitude is measured by the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) as the instrument. Besides using MLAT as the instrument to measure the

participants' language aptitude, this study also uses a questionnaire regarding conditional sentences to find out their mastery of conditional sentences.

There are some studies which have been conducted in the area of second language acquisition or/and language aptitude. Řepová (2004) conducted a study about the possibility of how a second language learner is able to acquire language as long as there is comprehensible input available and how the output plays a little role in SLA.

Alma Jeftić (2011) stated that cognitive theories are one of some crucial parts in second language or foreign language acquisition and can be used to emphasize the role of language aptitude in order to understand or comprehend the second language or foreign language. In her study, Jeftić investigated the concept of ambiguity in foreign language acquisition and the role of language aptitude. She argues that "ambiguity resolution is a key component of language comprehension and it is similar to ambiguity in perceptual process" (2011, p. 1). The study used the Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language-Foreign Test or CANAL-FT as the instrument.

Language aptitude as a part of second language acquisition field is one of interesting topics in psycholinguistics to be studied. Therefore, this study concerns with language aptitude and its relation to English second language learners in analyzing conditional sentences based on their knowledge of the concept of English conditional sentences after finishing their language aptitude test, in this case the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT).

1.2 Research Question

Relevant to the background, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the correlation between language aptitude and English second language learners' mastery of conditional sentences?

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aims to examine the correlation between language aptitude and English second language learners' mastery of conditional sentences by using MLAT as language aptitude instrument and a questionnaire regarding conditional sentences.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the correlation between language aptitude and English second language learners' mastery regarding conditional sentences. English second language learners that belong to English Education Department of Indonesia University of Education are expected to answers questions from three instruments for this study, they are the Modern Language Aptitude Test and test on conditional sentences. The data are analyzed based on the result from those instruments.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the development of language aptitude in foreign language studies or second language acquisition. Besides, it will help those who would like to acknowledge more about language aptitude and its relation to English second language learners' mastery of conditional sentences.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Research Design

This study conducts a quantitative approach to achieve the aims of the study. It is also known that quantitative approach is used when the study deals with testing relationship, describing two different variables, and examining cause-effect relations (Ragin, 1994).

1.6.2 Site and Subject of the Study

The subject of the study focuses on students who learn English as their second language in Indonesia University of Education. The samples consist of 20 university students who took English Language and Literature as their major.

1.6.3 Data Collection and Instruments

The data are collected from a language aptitude test called the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) as well as a test on conditional sentences.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

When it comes to analyzing the data, this study goes through several procedures, such as gathering the data which consist of the result of MLAT and test on conditional sentences from participant, analyzing the data from the instruments in accordance to Carroll's language aptitude theory and finding the correlation of both variables by using Pearson product-moment coefficient correlation.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

The research paper consists of five chapters. The organization runs as follow:

CHAPTER I

This chapter deals with background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper.

CHAPTER II

Chapter two focuses on theoretical review which deals with the research as well as related previous research.

CHAPTER III

Chapter three discusses research methodology, the steps and procedures of the study, and the data resources of the study.

CHAPTER IV

This chapter focuses on research findings and discussions that will be presented.

CHAPTER V

Chapter five deals with the interpretation of the study in a form of conclusion and suggestion for further research.