CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, purposes of the study, research question, and also the aims of the study. Finally, a brief overview of the significance of the study will be included along with defining some special terms used in the paper. The chapter which follows will present the theoretical foundation for the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In teaching activities, teachers often find problems to handle. Some researches findings indicate that a common problem for EFL teachers is dealing with a passive class, where students expected to be spoon-fed and do not participate in class activities. They lack initiative to learn. Most of them prefer to participate when the teacher tell them to do so.

Consequently, the class seems to be dominated by the teacher. In a class learning activity, students seem have no autonomy. This autonomy problem is getting worse because of another factor, the limited classroom time, not everything can be taught in class, due to students who have not enough time to practice English better (Suryawan, 2008). These problems need to be solved. Therefore, teacher needs to encourage the learner tobe autonomous learner.

Autonomous learner is a learner who has responsibility for his own learning in an independent manner (Higs, 1988). The point of autonomous learner is also emphasized by Geddes and Strurtridge (1997) that autonomous learner decides what he wants to learn of why he needs to learn, and then decides how is going to tackle the problems. It means they are an independent learner who knows what they want to learn and they decide what they want to do. Therefore, teacher who understands the effect of the autonomous learning will promote learners to become an autonomous learner.

A successful autonomous learner tends to use learning strategies (Skehan, 1989). Learning strategies are defined as a specific method of approaching a problem or task as modes of operation for achieving a particular end, or as a planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information (Brown, 2001:210). The employment of learning strategies seems necessary for students.

Oxford deems necessary that students be made aware of learning strategies. In line with this, Oxford (1990b) proposes that foreign or second language (L2) learning strategies are specific actions; behaviors, steps, or techniques students use--often consciously--to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2. It shows that learning strategies in L2 need to be taught specifically in order to improve their English skilss.

However, there are many different learning strategies can be employed by the language learner. But, as we know that in Indonesia, learners are not explicitly introduced to learning strategies and lack of awareness of learning strategies (www.academia.edu). Thus, these learning strategies are necessary to be introduced in the classroom and to be taught explicitly. Hence, teachers need to teach various learning strategies directly, which encouraged them to be responsible for their own learning and to develop their own learning strategies. Then, let the learners to choose the most suitable strategies which are appropriate for them.

As stated by Federholdt (1997:1) that language learner capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve his language skills in better way. Furthermore, according to Thompson and Rubin (1993) said that the use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skills areas. This notion, suggest that employing appropriate learning strategies would help students to develop their communicative English skills.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, it can be assumed that most teachers would agree that autonomous learners are much more likely to succeed with their studies than those learners who are heavily dependent on the teacher. As a result, most of the students are then expected to be autonomous learners.

Therefore, it will be interesting to investigate autonomous learning more deeply with the focus on autonomous learner since research concerning learning strategies employed by autonomous learners still receives little attention in Indonesia EFL context. The result of the study is expected to contribute and to support the dependent learners to enhance their English skills. This research attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What characteristics do the autonomous learners have?
2. What strategies are employed by autonomous learners to improve their English competence?
3. What factors influence the autonomous learners in learning English?

1.2 The Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study are formulated based on the problems to be investigated. The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the characteristics of the autonomous learners.
2. To investigate autonomous learning strategies which are applied by the autonomous learners.
3. To figure out the factors influencing the autonomous learners in learning English.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research has a fundamental significance theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study would be empirical information for the English teachers about autonomous learning strategies and factors which influence the choice of strategies used by the autonomous learners. Practically the results of the research are expected to formulate the model of language learning strategies used by the autonomous learner, to give some positive impacts both to the reader and the researcher about the autonomous learner issues that might be encountered in teaching, to give a practical guidance in implementing autonomous learning strategies and to be a reference either for English teachers or researchers to do further investigations in terms of autonomous learner. Moreover, the research findings may help other student to become an autonomous learner.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

To avoid misunderstandings of terms, the followings terms are defined as follows.

1. Autonomous learning : as "learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently", ability depends on possessing both knowledge about the alternatives from which choices have to be made and necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Willingness depends on having both the motivation and confidence to take responsibility for the choices required (Littlewood, 1996:97).
2. Autonomous learner: a learner who knows what he thinks and does; an important area of his life is determined by himself (Boud, 1988).
3. Learning strategy: refers to the actions and behaviors' a person uses to learn (Oxford, 1989.)

1.7 Organization of Thesis

The organization of the paper will be presented in five chapters. The subsequent chapters were organized as follows. Chapter I is Introduction. This chapter contains background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, the scope of the study, research questions, aims of the study, the significance of the study, the clarifications of the key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II highlights the detailed theories and frameworks which are related to autonomous learner. The theories have to do with explanation of Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1987; Broady & Kenning, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Barnett, 1993 about autonomous learner theories.

Chapter III emphasizes on the Methodology. This chapter points out the research methodology and procedures used in this study. It comprises the research method, and techniques in analyzing data.

Chapter IV deals with Data Presentation and Discussions. This chapter contains the result of the study that comprises findings followed by the discussions of the data.

Chapter V conveys the overview of the findings consisting some conclusions and suggestions. In this last chapter, the conclusion will be drawn and the suggestions will be put forward by the writer.