

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

The main goal of learning a Foreign Language (FL) is to be able to communicate using the target language. It means that communication is sending and receiving message effectively, and negotiating meaning in the communication with the interlocutor (Rubin & Thompson, 1994, as cited in Ya-ni, 2007). Seeing this fact, speaking skill seems much more important than reading and writing. However, in the EFL classrooms, it is common to find learners who are struggling to communicate their meaning using English.

The phenomenon is not surprising where there are limited practice opportunities for foreign language learners to communicate in the target language. There are also some other factors that influence learners' speaking skill mastery. First, learners are afraid of making mistakes when speaking in the target language. Second, Indonesian and English language have different rules of grammar. So, it is not easy for learners to sustain a conversation in English especially for low-proficiency level learners. Furthermore, based on the pre-survey, in high schools, learners used to practice speaking using scripted dialogue. So, they lack the skill of negotiation in the real-life communication using the target language. Third, the majority of learners have no idea about how to cope with the situation when they are confronted with some words they do not know. As the result, they tend to stop the conversation or leave the message unfinished. Then, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, and Noels (1998) said that the factor that influences students' speaking performance in the classroom is also because of their unwillingness to use L2 for communication.

Khan (2010) said that communicating in a foreign language is a complex multi-faceted skill. Therefore, learners should create some efforts to make communication using English becomes easier. Then, it is acceptable for learners making mistakes or errors in the process of learning. As what Selinker (1972)

believed that learner's errors were not seen as negative but positive efforts made by learners in an attempt to organize their interlanguage. He took the view that learners make efforts to control their learning, through the use of what he coined as communication strategies.

Communication strategies itself was firstly introduced by Selinker in his seminal paper in 1972 (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). But then, the former researcher who firstly proposed the taxonomy of communication strategies was Tarone in 1978. According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), the notion of second language (L2) communication strategies was raised with the recognition that the mismatch between L2 speakers' linguistic resources and communicative intentions often leads to difficulties or breakdowns in the communication. Therefore, communication strategies are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal (Færch & Kasper, 1983a, as cited in Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). The other experts define communication strategies as a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his/her meaning when faced with some difficulties (Coder, 1981) in communicating in imperfectly known second language (Stern, 1981) to enhance the effectiveness of communication (Canale, 1983).

It is believed that communication strategies play an important role in the development of strategic competence. Thus, communication strategies and strategic competence are interrelated. Canale and Swain (1980) stated that strategic competence is the major component of communicative competence, defining it as "verbal and nonverbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (p.30). Scattergood (2003, as cited in Maleki, 2010) thinks that strategic competence is cultivated if teachers create a language classroom in which communication strategies are taught and practiced.

Nevertheless, teaching communication strategies to language learners has been the source of some controversy in the past decades. Many researchers have argued about teaching and teachability of communication strategies. Most of

experts who cons would agree that strategic competence develop in the speakers' L1 is freely transferable to target language use (see Bagaerts & Paulisse, 1989; Bagaerts, Kellerman, & Bentlage, 1987; Kellerman, Ammerlaan, Bagaerts, & Paulisse, 1990; Paribakht, 1985, as cited in Dörnyei, 1995). This means that most adult language learners already have sufficient competence to communicate regardless of their L2/ foreign language proficiency levels. Kellerman (1991) concludes that "there is no justification for providing training in compensatory strategies in the classroom...teach the learner more language and let the strategies look after themselves" (p. 158).

In spite of many contradictory views about teaching communication strategies in the classroom, there are a number of researchers who strongly supported and conducted some research about it. Dörnyei (1995) argues that "most arguments concerning the teachability issue are based on indirect or inconclusive evidence, but it must be noted that some of these data actually appear to confirm the validity of strategy training" (p. 61). So, communication strategies training is actually not aimed to introduce the strategies to the learners because as what is previously mentioned that they have already have it in their first language system, but rather to make learners aware of the strategies.

A number of research have been done in the area of specific training of some communication strategies, to seek its potential usefulness. Færch and Kasper (1986) and Tarone and Yule (1989) reported on four different classroom projects that successfully incorporated strategy training into foreign language instruction. Tarone (1981) reported on a study by Piranian investigating learners of Russian, in which learners who had had some extracurricular exposure to Russian were found to use strategies more often and more effectively than their peers whose Russian experience was limited to the classroom. Dörnyei (1995), a renowned expert on communication strategies, piloted a study to obtain empirical data on the educational potential of strategy training. He found out the possibility of developing the quality and quantity of learners' use of at least some communication strategies through focused instruction.

Nonetheless, most of the above previous studies only focused on strategies for solving learners' own performance problems, which did not require interaction with others. These studies excluded the aspect of negotiation behaviors used when learners facing some problems of exchanging messages in the conversation. It is showed in their pretest and posttest test items which did not include pair work conversation.

Some studies showed that interaction skill in the negotiation of meaning between interlocutors is a crucial component for learning the target language. One of them is a study conducted by Nakatani (2005) in Japan who investigated the effect of awareness-raising training on oral communication strategy (OCSs) use in Japanese English class. In his study, OCSs was used instead of communication strategies because it specifically focused on the oral interaction and interlocutors' negotiation behavior for solving communication breakdowns. So, the strategies are used for an oral interaction not just a one-way communication. The result confirmed that the participants in the strategy training group significantly improved their oral proficiency test scores.

Based on the related research mentioned previously, OCSs could help learners to communicate effectively using foreign language and increase their negotiation skill in the conversation. It is said that the use of communication strategies could improve learners' skills for interpersonal communication (Bejarano, Levine, Olshtain, & Steiner, 1997; Clennel, 1995). For language trainers (teacher/lecturer), they may teach these strategies to improve students' speaking skills. Therefore, this study attempted to seek out the effect of teaching OCSs in the EFL speaking class. OCSs were explicitly taught in this class. As an experimental study, pre-test and posttest were held to assess the effect of teaching OCSs, and then the result from the experimental and control group were compared. The researcher concerns on how teaching OCSs affected some qualitative and quantitative aspects of strategy use as well as the improvement on students speaking skill. Then, students' perspective toward this strategies training

also were investigated. For further detail, the research questions and aims will be formulated in the following subchapter.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problems**

In general, the question is: do teaching oral communication strategies affect EFL students' speaking skill. Then, the researcher formulated three research questions:

- 1.2.1. What kinds of oral communication strategies are used by the students in the speaking class?
- 1.2.2. Do teaching oral communication strategies have an effect on the students' speaking skill?
- 1.2.3. What are the students' attitudes toward the teaching of oral communication strategies in the EFL speaking class?

## **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

The present study has an ultimate goal to find out the effect of teaching oral communication strategies in the EFL speaking class. Specifically, it mainly aimed at finding answers to the research questions mentioned earlier as follow:

- 1.3.1 To find out the kinds of oral communication strategies used by EFL students in the speaking class.
- 1.3.2 To find out the effect of teaching oral communication strategies to the EFL students' speaking skills.
- 1.3.3 To investigate the students' attitude toward the teaching of oral communication strategies in the EFL speaking class.

## **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

According to Richards (2008), the mastery of speaking skill in English is a priority for many L2 or foreign language learners. Then, it has become common

knowledge that learners mostly face difficulties in speaking English due to many factors mentioned earlier in the background of this study. So, it will be very useful for students to learn OCSs to overcome their difficulties in conveying message and maintaining conversation in English.

As such, the result of this study was expected to give some contribution to enrich the EFL method for teaching speaking skill. Then, hopefully, this study could be able to make language trainers aware of the necessity of teaching OCSs to improve students' speaking skill in the EFL classroom in general, and speaking class in particular.

### **1.5 The Scope of the Study**

This current research is limited to seek out the effect of teaching OCSs in the EFL speaking class in a private university in Kuningan, West Java, Indonesia. The OCSs used in this study were adapted from the list in a journal article written by Nakatani (2005). He adapted it from Váradi (1973), Bialystok (1990), Dörnyei (1995), and Dörnyei & Scott (1997). Not all strategies were taught in the classroom because some of them did not reflect the target language production or part of reduction strategies like first-language-based and interlanguage-based reduction strategies for instance. The OCSs that were taught in the speaking class was a group of achievement or compensatory strategies like self-solving strategies (paraphrase or circumlocution) and help seeking strategies (appeal for help and asking for repetition) for instance.

### **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

The following are some of terms which are used for the study and need exact definition to clarify:

- Oral communication strategies (OCSs) are systematic techniques employed by a speaker that are specifically focused on oral interaction and interlocutors' negotiation behavior for coping with communication breakdowns (Nakatani, 2005). In this study, the OCSs are the strategies (achievement or compensatory

strategies) used by the respondents in their speaking practice to survive in the communication and to show their speaking skill.

- Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning involving producing, receiving, and processing information (Brown, 2001). In the present study, speaking refers to the students' performance of using English language in the classroom interaction to communicate or convey their message.

### **1.7 Outline of the Thesis**

This research paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter one mainly discusses the reasons and purposes of the study. It presents the background of the study, formulation of the problems, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of key terms (to avoid misinterpretation), and outline of the thesis.

Chapter two discusses review of the related literature which serves some concepts adopted for this study and previous study undertaken by others. Chapter three explains the way this study conducted. It covers the research method, participants of the study, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter four contains the analysis and finding of the data collected. The last is chapter five contains conclusions and suggestions. Conclusion is the summary of the finding and discussion, and suggestion presents some recommendations and suggestions for further research.