

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the background of the study, statement of problems, purposes of the study, statement of hypotheses, scope of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms and organizational of the study.

1.1 Background

Native speakers of a language seem to deliver speech smoothly, appropriately, effectively and effortlessly. Even though they encounter problem in the content and appropriateness of the message (Temple, 1992), their speech is perceived as fluent. In contrast, fluency in second language is problematic (Riggenbach, 1991) due to various definitions related to the concept of fluency. Lennon (1990) suggests two senses of fluency in EFL context. In a broader sense, fluency refers to overall oral proficiency. A learner can be judged as fluent if her speech performance of a language is competent like that of native speaker of the language. Meanwhile, fluency in a narrow sense refers to one component of oral proficiency. A learner can be judged as fluent if her speech performance of a language is smooth and speedy without any silent pauses and hesitations, filled pauses, self-corrections, repetitions, or false starts. The study focuses on the fluency in a narrow sense.

Fluency can be measured in several ways. Skehan (1999 in Skehan & Foster, 1999) proposes two types of fluency which are breakdown fluency (number and duration of pause) and repair fluency (repetition, false start, reformulation, and replacement). Compared to other measurements, pause is a major indicator of fluency of a language because it has great influence on all the other temporal variables used to measure fluency (Götz, 2013). In the case of English as Second Language, pause within clauses, or mid-pause, is one aspect that distinguish the fluency of L1 speakers from that of L2 learners. The claim arrives from the findings of several comparative studies of different L1 backgrounds, which are Russian (Riantantseva, 2001), Brazilian-Portuguese (Xhafaj, 2006), various L1 backgrounds based in London (Tavakoli, 2011) and Thai (Isarankura, 2013). These studies show that one factor that differentiates L1 speakers from L2 learners is the inappropriate location of pauses: L1 speakers pause more at clause boundary while L2 learners tend to pause within clause. The

findings also indicate that the higher the English proficiency of the speakers, the less they produce mid-pause in their speech.

Based on cognitive perspective, it has been observed that pre-task planning, degree of familiarity, and tight structured narrative direct learners' attention towards fluency. Foster & Skehan (1996), Skehan & Foster (1997), and Foster & Skehan (1999) have observed that pre-task planning (an opportunity to plan utterance up to 10 minutes) is associated with a more fluent performance. Also, L2 learners are more fluent when talking about familiar information (e.g personal information exchange task) rather than unfamiliar one (e.g narrating task and debating task). A more recent study Tavakoli & Foster (2011) investigate the effect of narrative structure towards L2 learners. Narrative structure refers to the order of events which can be loose or tight. A loose structured narrative can be narrated without following the order of events and the story still make sense. On the other hand, the events of a tight structured narrative are clear from the beginning, to the middle, and end, and thus the event should be narrated orderly. This type of narrative structure is also called a problem-solution structure (Tavakoli, 2009). It is found that a tight structured narrative is associated with a more fluent performance (Skehan & Foster, 1997; Tavakoli, 2009; and Tavakoli & Foster, 2011).

There are several issues that are not observed yet in the previous studies mentioned above. First, minimal attention has been directed towards the Indonesian learners of English. Second, knowledge of how learners from different level of proficiency handle the task demand has received a little attention. It is only intermediate level that is observed in the previous studies. Third, existing studies are mostly used a cut-off point of 1 sec (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan and Foster, 1997; Foster & Skehan, 1999) and 400 ms (Tavakoli, 2009; Foster & Tavakoli, 2009; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011). Meanwhile, the investigation of cut-off point by De Jong & Bosker (2013) shows that pauses between 250-300 ms show the highest correlation with L2 proficiency, while the others show lower correlation. It may indicate that a cut-off point of 250-300 ms offers a new insight towards the relation between pause distribution and narrative structure.

Thus, this study is conducted to investigate the issues mentioned above. It seeks to investigate the relation between narrative structure, English proficiency, and mid-pause of Indonesian learners of English. The Indonesian learners of English are represented by English students at Indonesia University of Education because it is the most convenient way. By

examining the relationship of mid-pause distribution and task design on Indonesian context, we can better understand how Indonesian learners handle different structures of narrative task. Moreover, examining the performance of learners with different level of English proficiency may provide necessary knowledge to what extent a factor, such as task design, can influence the performance of learners. Last, by using 250 ms as the cut-off point, we can get a better representation of L2 proficiency (De Jong & Bosker, 2013). By this knowledge, teacher or language tester may provide a strategy to enhance oral fluency by considering the effect of task design. Moreover, it may provide necessary knowledge for identifying pause pattern in different narrative type.

1.2 Statements of Problems

The study is aimed to examine the relationship between English proficiency, narrative structure and the distribution of mid-pause by Indonesian learners of English, particularly English students at Indonesia University of Education. Therefore, the study is aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does narrative structure affect the distribution of mid-pause in learners' English speech?
2. Does narrative structure affect the distribution of mid-pause in learners with different level of English proficiency?

1.3 Purposes of Research

The purposes of this study are: to describe the effect of narrative structure towards the distribution of mid-pause of Indonesian learners of English and to describe the relation between narrative structure and the distribution of mid-pause of learners with different level of English proficiency.

1.4 Statement of Hypothesis

Based on the previous studies (Tavakoli & Foster, 2011; Tavakoli, 2009; Foster & Tavakoli, 2009; and Skehan & Foster, 1997), the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Narrative structure affects the performance of L2 learners: L2 learners that perform a narrative with tight structure produce fewer mid-pauses compared to that of a loose structured narrative.
2. The performance of L2 learners with higher English proficiency is not affected by narrative structure compared to that of L2 learners with lower English proficiency.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between three variables which are: (1) mid-pause distribution of Indonesian learners of English, particularly English students at Indonesia University of Education; (2) narrative structure; and (3) English proficiency. Thus, the research was undertaken as follows.

1. The data were gathered from 40 participants of English students at Indonesia University of Education with different level of proficiency. The first is Intermediate level (525-542) and the second is Higher Intermediate level (543-626) as indicated by Cambridge Institute. Intermediate level was chosen as a comparison to previous studies which mostly concerned with this level of English proficiency. Meanwhile, Higher Intermediate level was chosen to see whether or not narrative structure affected the performance of learners with higher level than Intermediate level.
2. In order to see the effect of different narrative structure, the mean scores of mid-pause produced in loose narrative structure and tight narrative structures were compared using paired t-test. Meanwhile, in order to see the performance in different English proficiency level, the mean scores were compared using independent t-test.
3. The study focused its investigation on pause more than 250 ms produced by the speaker when uttering a speech. How pauses are perceived by listeners is excluded from the study.
4. The study only investigated pauses that occur within clause boundary.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The study has the following limitations:

1. The participants of the study are limited to intermediate level of English proficiency group. The beginner level and advanced level of English proficiency group are not investigated.
2. The use of PTESOL score as a way to control the variable of English proficiency has several limitations. First, there is no speaking score in PTESOL test so that the score is only covering the listening, reading, and grammar skill. Students with higher PTESOL score may speak more fluent or more disfluent. However, it is still considered as the relevant measure of overall English proficiency in Indonesia University of Education. Second, limited type of questions on PTESOL test may

create a repetition effect so that the score is not purely presenting their English proficiency.

3. The study limits its focus to the performance of spontaneous speech of Indonesian learners of English, particularly English students at Indonesia University of Education. Thus, the findings cannot be taken as the generalization of L2 learners in different language contexts because different contexts may yield different results.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Previous studies concerning fluency in learners have provided necessary knowledge of how to measure fluency and what affect fluency in L2 learners. However, the knowledge provided is still incomplete. Therefore, this study adds more information on fluency of Indonesian learners of English, particularly English students at Indonesia University of Education. Examining pause pattern of English students may help provide necessary knowledge for identifying how mid-pause is distributed in different narrative type. This knowledge may be useful for teacher and language tester as a consideration in choosing narrative task features to optimize the performance of learners.

1.8 Clarification of Terms

In order to understand this study, there are several terms that need to be clarified.

1. Pause

The term pause in the study refers to a silence moment produced by a speaker as she utters a spontaneous speech, or it is called “silent pause”. Other literatures may use pause to refer to silent pause and filled pause. The detailed explanation of pause was presented in the following chapter.

2. Mid-pause

Mid-pause refers to a pause occurred within clause boundaries which is seen as problem in speech processing (Pawley and Syder, 2000). Speakers that are frequently produced mid-pause are considered to be dysfluent (Xhafaj, 2006; Riggenbach, 1991). It is also one of the factors that distinguish native from L2 learners (Tavakoli, 2011; Rianzantseva, 2001).

3. L1 and L2 speaker

L1 refers to the language acquired by a speaker, while L2 refers to the second language learnt by the speaker. Some literatures may refer L1 speaker as native, and L2 speaker as learners.

4. Task design

Task design refers to a type of task used to manipulate the output of the L2 learners. It covers the way a task is presented towards the learners. In this study, learners are presented with narratives that have different structure (tight and loose).

5. Narrative Structure

Narrative structure refers to the way the events in the story are ordered. The structure of the narrative can be tight, which means that the order of events in the story is fixed and cannot be negotiated. There is also a clear problem-solution, where the sequences of events develop clearly from the beginning, to the middle, and to the end. Meanwhile, a loose structured narrative can be narrated randomly and the story still makes sense. There is no problem-solution in the story, which creates the impression of unclear sequence from the beginning of the story, to the middle and to the end (Tavakoli & Foster, 2011; Tavakoli, 2009). The detailed explanation of narrative structure is presented in the next chapter.

1.9 Organization of the Paper

The study was organized in five chapters. The introduction of the study was explained in this chapter. Then, chapter II presents the theoretical foundation of the study, including speech production model, how pauses are related to speech production and how speech production is affected by task designs. Relevant previous studies are also included in chapter II. Then, chapter III describes the research design, data collection, and data analysis. After that, chapter IV lays out the results of data analysis including the descriptive analysis, the paired t-test and the independent t-test. Finally, the conclusions of the study are presented in chapter V, including the main findings, the implications, and the recommendations of future research.