

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION



This chapter provides brief information about the research background, the problem statement, the hypothesis, the aims of the study, and also the research procedure used. The clarification of the main terms and the organization of the paper included in this study are presented as well.

### 1.1 Background

Achieving the ultimate success in learning and teaching needs many efforts to do. One of the efforts is through understanding the characteristics of the learners who are directly involved in the process. This condition is applicable for all kinds of learning and teaching process including foreign language learning.

Each foreign language learner has different and unique profile of basic aptitudes, learning styles, personality preferences, and attitudes (Broersma, 1989). This means that each individual differs in his/her type of basic aptitudes (or intelligence), the way he/she learns, what he/she likes and dislikes, and also the way he/she responds something, in this case foreign language learning tasks. In relation to this, ideal foreign language teachers are supposedly taking these different factors into their consideration due to the needs of finding the best way in teaching. Therefore, this will help them promote the success of foreign language learning.

According to the above description, aptitude for learning something will be the focus of this study. Thus, we should, firstly, distinguish the meaning of aptitude from the term basic aptitudes (Makmun, 1999:38). He states that basic aptitudes mean intelligence while aptitude is one of elements included in it. In other words,

basic aptitudes consist of aptitudes. According to Warren's (1934) *Dictionary of Psychology*, cited in Carroll (1973:286), aptitude is defined as:

"A condition or set of characteristics regarded as symptomatic of an individual's ability to acquire with training some (usually specified) knowledge, skill, or set of responses such as the ability to speak foreign language, to produce music, etc."

In addition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* delineates aptitude as:

1. A potential to acquire skill, which is natural talent or ability for something, especially one that is not fully developed, and
2. Quickness in learning, in this case quickness and ease in learning.

The first definition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is in line with what Warren's (1934) states. It focuses only in aptitude as a specific ability of individual to acquire knowledge or skill, while the second one more focuses on the length of time spent and how easy an individual learns something (Stansfield, 1989)

Considering the importance of aptitude in learning something, in this case foreign language aptitude, there are several tests used nowadays (Sasaki, 1993: 326). One of the tests commonly used is the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test), which was, firstly, developed as a response to the United States government's need. This is utilized in relation to their efforts especially for training people in foreign language program due to strategic importance (Stansfield, 1989).

The MLAT is designed by Carroll and Sapon (1959) to evaluate English native speaker (Broersma, 1989). This test is used to measure certain cognitive tasks that are important for learning a second or foreign language. Those cognitive tasks according to Carroll (1962), cited in Stansfield (1989), are as follows.

1. Phonetic coding ability as the ability to store a new language sounds in memory and the ability to make connections between sounds and symbols in a language.

2. Grammatical sensitivity, which is the ability to recognize the grammatical function of words or other linguistic structures or syntactical patterning of sentences in language.
3. Rote learning ability that is a kind of general memory in which individuals seem to differ in their ability to apply their memory to the foreign language situation.
4. Inductive learning ability i.e. the ability to infer rules that govern the use of language involving meaning or grammatical form.

By administering this kind of test, Broersma (1989) states that foreign language teachers can take the following advantages.

1. The result of the test will help teachers recognize students' strengths and weaknesses as foreign language learners.
2. This is also useful for tailoring the classroom environment and instruction in relation to make foreign language learning become more worthwhile and relevant.
3. Teachers will also be able to predict students' success in foreign language learning.

Some researchers, according to Lindgreen (1975:225), have examined the correlation between aptitude and second/foreign language proficiency for example a research conducted by Cooper (1964). He did a correlational study of factors related to success in German and found out that a test of English grammar and a special test designed to predict success in foreign languages (language aptitude test) indicated significant correlation.

Based on the description, the writer is going to investigate the use of foreign language aptitude test in relation to students' English proficiency especially in the form of their English summative scores. This research will try to examine the correlation between those two factors since we all know that English is still learnt as a foreign language in Indonesia.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In this matter, the writer would like to focus on finding out the correlation between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores. Thus, the research is guided by the questions, i.e.:

“Is there a significant correlation between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores?”

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

There are three things that should be contained by a research i.e. an obvious statement of the purpose of the study, specific research questions, and precise hypotheses (Brown, 1998:109). He also states that hypothesis is one of the important points that should be presented in a research even if those former two points are not clearly written.

According to Hatch and Farhady (1982:3), “Hypothesis is a tentative statements about the outcome of the research.” For that reason, the hypothesis proposed in this research is as follows.

“There is a significant correlation between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores.”

#### 1.4 The Aims of the Study

In general, the research is proposed to find the right and important steps to take or to offer solutions so that it will give an optimal result.

Moreover, the aims of the study are:

1. to examine whether there is a significant relation between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores; and
2. to find out how far the contribution of students' foreign language aptitude towards their English proficiency is.

The result and implications of this study will also expectantly provide valuable contribution to the English learning and teaching.

#### 1.5 Research Procedures

The study is a quantitative study to investigate the relationship between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores. Consequently, this study applies correlation statistic methods (Brown, 1988:126). The design of the study is *ex post facto* designs. This is chosen since the researcher does not have control over the selection and manipulation of the independent variable (Hatch and Farhady, 1982:26).

The study relies on the sample drawn from the population of the first grade students of SMUN 14 Bandung. In this case, the first grade students are chosen with the assumption that on this level, they are introduced to many new or developed materials in English learning comparing to what they have got in junior high school grade.

The samples constitute students selected by purposive sampling procedure from the entire population. This is preferred based on McMillan and Schumacher

(1984), cited in Ruseffendi (1988:92), stating that samples for correlational study must be at least 30 samples. The deeper explanation of sampling procedure will be explained in chapter three.

### **1.6 Clarification of Main Terms**

This study focuses on finding out the correlation between students' foreign language aptitude and their English summative test scores. Therefore, there are several terms that should be clearly defined. They are:

1. Correlation which is defined here as the connection between two variables which can be measured by Pearson Product Moment coefficient correlation or Spearman Rank-Order correlation formula.
2. Aptitude is defined as:
  - a. A potential to acquire skill which is natural talent or ability for something, especially one that is not fully developed, and
  - b. Quickness in learning: quickness and ease in learning in terms of the length of time spent to learn something.
3. Foreign language aptitude: the ability of an individual to master foreign language material, which is determined by quickness and ease in learning it.
4. English summative test: an English test administered at the end of the time of learning in relation to measure students' achievement on the materials learnt.

## **I.7 Organization of the Paper**

This paper is organized into five chapters as follows.

### **Chapter I (Introduction)**

This chapter provides the background of the study and a brief explanation of the issues and various aspects related to the realization of this paper such as the statement of problems, the aims of the research, the hypothesis, the research procedures, and the clarification of main terms

### **Chapter II (Theoretical Foundation)**

This chapter covers the theoretical foundation of the research in the form of description about individuals' differences in learning, the role of aptitude in learning, sorts of tests used to assess aptitude and the advantages of measuring it.

### **Chapter III (Methodology)**

This chapter includes an explicit description of the research methodology that has been briefly introduced in chapter I. This chapter comprises the research method and design, population and samples, research instrument, and data collection and analysis.

### **Chapter IV (Data Analysis and Research Findings)**

This chapter describes the result of trying out the instrument, the data collected, the analysis of the data, and the interpretation based on the data gained as the research findings.

### **Chapter V (Conclusion and Suggestion)**

This chapter is divided into two parts, i.e.:

*Conclusion*, which is a general interpretation towards all research findings.

*Suggestion*, which is an implication drawn from the process of the research and the research findings that will open an opportunity to conduct a follow-up research on the same issues.



