

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses some aspects related to the background of the study. It includes research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, clarification of the terms, research limitation, and thesis organization.

1.1 Background

From time to time, the number of teachers, lecturers and educators wishing to study abroad are growing rapidly. Even though the countries they are intending to go may not be English-speaking countries, these people's need of speaking English as the main means of communication is inevitable. Nonetheless, for those people who will be studying in English-speaking countries, their English speaking ability has become one thing that they cannot do without. In order to achieve better English skills before they leave for the target foreign country, these people usually enroll in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses to equip them with a proper English ability for their prospective studies. Besides that, these people are required to take English language tests such as the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) and pass some certain scores with the purpose of being legible to be accepted in the desired university.

IELTS is widely recognized as a language requirement for entering universities mainly in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. However, as the years passed more and more countries in Europe and the United

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States of America are now accepting IELTS score as an acknowledged tool for measuring one's English competence. Speaking skill in IELTS test plays an important role which each IELTS candidate must possess, both for their potential studies in English-mediated university classes and for achieving the passing grades in the speaking test of the IELTS.

Speaking test in IELTS involves an approximately 15-minute one on one interview with an appointed English-native examiner. The 2-minute monologue speaking in part two is what makes IELTS speaking test such a daunting task for many of IELTS candidates. The fact that each candidate will face an English-native interviewer itself has already drawn a scary mental-note, let alone giving a 2-minute speech by themselves based on the topic and questions given in the cue card provided by the interviewer. It appears that English speaking skill is found as a real challenge by Indonesians even though they have studied English since in the elementary school.

Learning strategy is very crucial in learning language because an appropriate strategy helps learners to be more independent since teachers cannot always be around when students speak nor have questions about the target language. This is consistent with Chamot et al. (1999) who state that the goal of learning strategies is to assist learners in developing awareness of their own learning. She insists that learners who are aware of their own learning processes, strategies and preferences, are able to regulate their learning activities and become increasingly independent.

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The teaching in EAP course is intended to provide the participants with an intense exposure of mastering English in a fabricated highly-stake set of tests namely IELTS. In this kind of course, participants have a limited time frame to boost their ability in language learning. As supports by Oxford (2001), learning strategies could come in handy to facilitate learners in regulating their own process of knowing, understanding, and learning English, involving themselves actively in language learning, and in this case, also in accomplishing a certain required IELTS score. The suitable strategies could also enhance students' confidence in speaking in English and this very fact could be such a great strength in improving one's speaking learning process.

This study attempted to investigate the learning strategies used by the EAP participants in learning speaking for IELTS test. Moreover, this study was also expected to reveal some learning strategies that are perceived as the most effective by them. It is expected that the results of this study will contribute to the understanding of learning strategies for IELTS preparation. The results may also be used for further speaking learning for pedagogical purposes.

1.2 Research Questions

The present research investigated the problems that are formulated in the following questions:

1. What strategies do the EAP course participants use in learning speaking for IELTS?
2. What strategies are most effective as perceived by the participants?

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1.3 The Purposes of the Study

This study aims at finding answers to the previous questions:

1. To find out the strategies EAP course participants use in learning speaking for IELTS speaking test.
2. To find out the strategies are most effective as perceived by the participants.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This descriptive study is mainly to elaborate one of the phenomena of English skills learning in a language course. It is conducted to reveal these doctoral scholarship grantees' learning strategies for speaking in IELTS and to discover their opinions about how the English speaking learning is conducted, both in the language course and in their individual ways. In addition, this study is expected to disclose these learners' strategies that are considered most helpful by them. Regardless to the fact that the scope of this present study is limited, the findings of this research confirm the existing theory on learning strategies.

This study could be one piece of practical information for the English teachers about students learning strategies for IELTS preparation. In relation to it, students of English language subject may also find this writing helpful as their reference

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on how to choose the best possible learning strategies for or on their own. This study could be a reference for the other researchers in the future to do more advanced analysis on students' IELTS speaking learning strategy in particular.

1.5 Clarification of the Terms

Following are some of the terms that are used in this study:

- (1) Learning Strategy — learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information, specific actions taken by the learner to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations (Oxford, 2001).
- (2) IELTS — or 'International English Language Testing System', is an international standardized test of English language proficiency. IELTS is accepted by most Australian, British, Canadian, Irish, New Zealand and South African academic institutions, over 3,000 academic institutions in the United States, and various professional organizations (wikipedia, 2011).
- (3) Speaking test in IELTS — the speaking test is a structured one-on-one oral interview, designed to encourage candidates to demonstrate their ability in speaking English. It is done in 11-14minutes, consisted of three parts, and assessed by using four analytical criteria and subscales over 9 band scores (Davies, 2008).

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1.6 Research Limitation

This study is restricted on the issue of speaking learning strategies that the students of a language course use in learning English speaking for IELTS. This study illustrates the most suitable and useful strategies based on the students' personal belief. It also tries to investigate the students' most preferred learning strategies and whether this type of EAP program, which is an intensive IELTS preparation course, can provide a different language environment for them as language learners. However, this study does not attempt to observe other variables that might influence students' achievement, such as the participants' motivation, gender, and the instructors' competence.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the present study. Chapter two discusses the theoretical accounts relevant to the present study. Chapter three elaborates the research methodology. Chapter four presents the data analysis and the discussion of the findings. At last, chapter five draws the conclusion and offers suggestions.

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