

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the introduction to the present study. It consists of background, research questions, aims of the study, hypothesis, scope of the study, significance of the study, method of the study, sites and participants, data collection, data analysis, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

In recent years, vocational school, as one of education systems for high school in Indonesia, has played an important role in educating students in becoming professional and contributory workers for national and international institutions and companies. As the global economy progresses, it is essential that students in vocational schools are expected to acquire English communicative competence skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in order to meet the needs of globalization.

However, some phenomena appear in teaching and learning English at vocational school. The goal of vocational school is to develop students' professional skills – either basic or advance skills – in order to let students enter the work field. Because it is career-oriented, vocational school has focused on teaching professional knowledge and specialization skills. As a result, the teaching of English has been neglected. Furthermore, most of attending students are likely to be those who do not perform well in academic subjects, especially

English subject. These phenomena affect on students' English proficiency abilities which fall significantly behind those of the students in general high school.

In line with the phenomena stated above, it is acceptable that the differences in learning strategies result in the success of learning second or foreign language (Ellis, 1986). Successful learners use more and better learning strategies than do less successful learners (Oxford; 1989, 1993 cited in Kyung Ok, 2003). Stern (1983) defines that learning strategies are general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner. Mostly, they are conscious and goal-driven, especially in the beginning stage of engaging new language task (Chamot, 2005). Moreover, learning strategies are described as “the ways in which students try to understand and remember new information” (Jordan, 1997) or as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task, used by students to enhance their own language learning” (Oxford, 2003). In other words, language learning strategies are students' actions taken to try to master the target language.

Within the area of foreign language research, a number of studies indicate that learning strategies played significant role in a successful language learning. Studies (Naiman, Frolich, Todesco, and Stern 1978 cited in Stern 1983) on ‘good language learners’ found that good language learners take advantage of potentially useful learning situations, and if necessary create them. They developed learning techniques and strategies appropriate to their individual needs.

Furthermore, Kyung Ok (Wenden and Rubin 1987; Chamot and Kupper 1989; Oxford and Crookall 1989; Cohen 1990; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1993; Oxford *et al.* 1993) affirms that the most frequent finding among the investigation of language learning strategies is that the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill areas. For example, Ming-Nuan Yang (2007) found that language proficiency of 451 junior college students is influenced by learners' use of language learning strategy. In accordance with this, Lengkanawati (2004) states that the powerful role of learning strategies will result in improved students' learning outcome.

Based on the problems mentioned above and the facts that each student manifests certain preferred language learning strategies, this study attempt to find out whether those strategies relate to the students' English proficiency as indicated by WJEPT and further to identify the language learning strategies employed by the vocational school students of SMK Negeri 2 Baleendah.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the problems to investigate cover:

1. Do students' language learning strategies correlate with their English proficiency?
2. What kinds of language learning strategies are employed by the students?

1.3 Aims of The Study

The study is expected to:

1. investigate whether there is a correlation between students' language learning strategies and their English proficiency
2. identify students' language learning strategies that are employed by the students

1.4 Hypothesis

As Brown, J.D (1988) said that hypothesis means a statement about the possible outcomes of a study. Because it is an important element of this study, the writer uses null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis as follows:

H_o: There is no correlation between students' language learning strategies and their English proficiency

H_a: There is a correlation between students' language learning strategies and their English proficiency

1.5 Scope of The Study

In accordance with the aims stated above, this study is limited only to find out the nature of the relationship existed between the language learning strategy use and English proficiency among the students and to identify language learning strategies employed by the students of SMK Negeri 2 Baleendah.

1.6 Significance of The Study

Investigation that deals with language learning strategies in language learning and teaching field is important for several reasons. According to Griffiths (2004),

language learning strategy fits easily and encompasses a wide variety of different methods and approaches. For example, memory and cognitive strategies, which are involved in the development of vocabulary and knowledge, can be assimilated into grammar translation method.

The existing relationship between students' language learning strategies and their English proficiency help students to choose appropriate strategies that suit them better and build up their independence whereby they can take control of their own learning. In addition with that, language learning strategies, while observable or non-observable, give teachers valuable clues about how their students understand, learn, or remember new information presented in the classroom. Therefore, their contribution is visible to vocational school.

1.7 Research Method

This study primarily uses descriptive analysis method and quantitative approach in a form of correlational study with an ex-post facto design in order to find out the relationship between students' language learning strategies and their English proficiency. Further explanation about the population and sample of the study, data collection, and data analysis are described as follow.

1.7.1 Population and Sample

This study is conducted at SMK Negeri 2 Baleendah, a vocational school which offers 8 classes from four departments: Tata Kecantikan, Tata Busana, Restoran, and Kimia Industri. The population of this study is the third grade students enrolled in Academic Year 2009/2010. Three classes, consist of 62 third grade

students from 3 Busana 2, 3 Restoran 2, and 3 Kimia Industri, are chosen as the sample. The writer chooses this school because it applies WJEPT program and there is accessibility to conduct the study.

1.7.2 Data Collection

In collecting the data, the writer uses some instruments as follows:

1. Questionnaire

The writer distributes the questionnaire to students in order to gain the required data which covers students' language learning strategies. The instrument used in this study was Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). SILL questionnaire ESL/EFL Version 7.0 (Oxford, 1989) measures the type (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social) and frequency of strategy use. The questionnaire is translated into Indonesian language so that easier to understand by the students.

2. Document observation

The writer collects the result of students' English proficiency of West Java English Proficiency Test (WJEPT) score from teacher's document. WJEPT is regional English test which measures an examinee's general English ability. It has the same form with Test of English International Communication (TOEIC) which is sponsored by Regional Office of Education and developed by Vocational English Teachers Association (VETA) in province level.

3. Interview

Some students are interviewed by the writer to get more information about their language learning strategies that cannot be gained from the questionnaire.

1.7.3 Data Analysis

1. The data collected from the questionnaire is processed as follows:
 - a. Classifying the statements into categories
 - b. Tabulating each item based on categories
 - c. Counting the total score of each questionnaire
 - d. Interpreting the score
2. The document collection is done as follows:
 - a. Collecting the teacher's document which contains students' WJEPT score
 - b. Listing each participant scores into the table
3. Testing both the normality and linearity of the data from questionnaire and WJEPT scores
4. Correlating the data from both questionnaires and students' score from WJEPT by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2} \sqrt{n(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2}}$$

(Hatch & Farhady, 1982)

5. Testing the hypothesis

6. Finding out the students' language learning strategies by using descriptive statistic.
7. Making the report.

1.8 Clarification of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer would like to clarify some key terms used in this study:

1. Language learning strategy: steps taken by learners which are important to improve language performance (Oxford, 1990). In this case, language learning strategy refers to students' techniques for acquiring knowledge in foreign language learning.
2. SILL: Strategy Inventory Language Learning version 7.0 (Oxford, 1990). It measures students' language learning strategy.
3. WJEPT program: a program which is adapted from TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) conducted by Vocational English Teachers Association (VETA) in province level.
4. Proficiency: the degree of skill measured without reference to a particular curriculum. In this study, the proficiency refers to students' communicative competence of English as indicated by WJEPT score.

1.9 Organization of The Paper

The paper is organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter contains introduction which covers background, research questions, scope of study, significant of study, hypothesis, research method, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II Theoretical Foundation

It includes theoretical foundations which serves basis for investigating the problem of the study.

Chapter III Research Methodology

It contains methodological of the study which contains research method, population and sample, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussions

This chapter reports the results of the study. It contains the findings and discussions.

Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions

This section contains of conclusions and suggestions accordance with the study.