

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English appears to be the language mostly used to transfer the development of almost all aspects of life especially science and technology. In this global era, mastering this language is considered very important to keep up with these developments. Hamied (2003:14) stated that English, in this information technology era which is growing very fast, plays very strategic and important roles in the whole society. He further noted that according to the NEC Research Institutes (2000), 86, 55% of the world information is transferred in English.

Seeing this phenomenon, the Indonesian government feels that its people need to have the competence in using this language. The States Policy (GBHN) 1999-2004 put foreign language in a very important position in national education context (Lengkanawati 2003:64). In consequence, the language is made one of the compulsory subjects taught at junior and senior high schools.

Students in Indonesia have English as their compulsory subject to learn in the formal schools starting from their first year of junior high school. However, in certain areas such as in big cities, many of them have even been familiar to this language since they are in their elementary schools. Those schools have included English in their curriculum as the local content to teach to the students.

The 2004 English curriculum, the curriculum suggested by the government, states that the main target of English language learning for the students of junior high

school is to have the discourse competence; the ability to communicate both in oral or written language in a communication event (Depdiknas, 2004:8). The curriculum further elaborates that to reach this competence needs the support of several competences, namely: the socio-cultural competence, the linguistic competence, the actional competence, and the strategic competence. The socio-cultural competence refers to the ability to convey messages appropriately according to the cultural contexts where and when the communication happens. The linguistic competence refers to the ability to understand the language features and to apply them appropriately. The actional competence refers to the ability to use the language in the real communication both in oral and written and the strategic competence refers to the skills and abilities of the language user to apply many kinds of strategy in communication. In addition to these competences, the curriculum also includes positive attitudes towards learning English as one important aspect students should possess (Depdiknas, 2004:48).

Approaches and methods of teaching and learning English in Indonesian schools, particularly in junior and senior high school level, have evolved and developed through time. The government has done many efforts to make the English teaching and learning in these levels of school more effective. The curriculum makers, hand in hand with teachers, have tried to find the best ways to teach this language to the students to get the best learning outcome. The curriculum has been changed and teachers are upgraded with up-to-date methods and best practices on how to teach the language in the classroom effectively.

However, the result of teaching and learning process for this subject in most Indonesian high schools, especially in junior high school level, is still far from being satisfactory. All of these efforts cannot largely improve the students' achievement in learning the language. Students' English mastery, after their study for three years or even more, is considered very low. Many junior high schools students failing in their National Examination (UAN) in this subject for the passing grade of 4.25 is one indication.

There are many factors believed to have contributed to this condition. One of them is the student factor. The students, as the subject who learn the language, hold very important keys for the success of learning their second language. Factors such as students' learning strategies and their attitude towards learning a foreign language are thought to be beneficial to the second language learning. As the parts of student factor, students' attitude towards learning and their strategies in learning English are considered to be essential to determine the success of learning the language. Having certain strategies and good attitudes towards learning a second language is believed to be advantageous for second language learners. Learners with those two features are assumed to be more successful in their language learning. Dansereau states (in Oxford 1993:10) that

some researches on learning foreign language come up with the results which show that some of the best learners use affective and social strategies to control their emotional state, to keep themselves motivated on-task, and to get help when they need it.

Language Learning Strategies (LLS) are believed to help learners to cope with the problems they face in learning a foreign language. Oxford (1990:17) indicated that successful foreign language learners employ either direct strategies i.e.,

memory, cognitive, and compensation or indirect strategies i.e., metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. In line with this, O'Malley and Chamot (1984) in K.Orr (1999:132) explained that the most common finding is that the use of appropriate LLS leads to the improvement of proficiency or achievement in specific or overall skill areas. Some findings of relevant strategy research outside of the L2 field have also shown the powerful role of learning strategies in improving students' learning outcome.

The present study seeks to reveal the language learning strategies employed by students of junior high school especially those of students categorized as good language learners in learning English. It is also to find the relationship between the LLS they use with their achievement in learning the language. In relation with the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school, this study is also intended to uncover if students' LLS are relevant to the strategic competence and good attitude towards learning English it proposes.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

This study mainly explores junior high school students' language learning strategies (LLS) and their relationship with students' achievement in learning English. It is also to investigate if students' LLS relevant to the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school. Accordingly, the research problems are formulated in the following questions.

- a) What learning strategies are applied by junior high school students in learning English?

- b) What learning strategies are applied by junior high school students categorized as good language learners in learning English?
- c) Is there any relationship between the LLS the students apply and their achievement in learning English?
- d) To what extent are students' frequently used LLS related with the strategic competence and attitude toward learning English proposed by the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

As the main purposes of other research in learning strategies, Huda (1999:53) put forward that it is to make learning strategies understandable to teachers in order that they can give strategy training to their students. The specific objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

- a. to find the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) all student respondents employ in learning English,
- b. to find the most frequent LLS good language learners employ in learning English,
- c. to identify if there is a correlation between the LLS students employ and their achievement in learning the language and,
- d. to explore if the students' frequently used LLS related with the strategic competence and attitude toward learning English proposed by the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is mainly to show the actual LLS students of junior high school apply in learning English, to find if there is a correlation between the LLS they apply and their achievement in learning the language and to uncover if students' frequently used LLS are related with the strategic competence and attitude toward learning English proposed by the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school. This study is significant due to some reasons.

The first is that this study is meant to show the language learning strategies mostly used and needed by students in learning English. The findings, later, will give perspectives to teachers to decide the right LLS to teach to their students to learn English effectively. Besides, it will hopefully help teachers as well as book writers to select and provide appropriate classroom teaching learning activities and materials that fit the language learning strategies students apply in learning the language.

The second reason is due to the fact that some students have good achievement and are assumed to learn the language effectively while some others get poor achievement indicating that they cannot learn English successfully. Concerning with this, this study will hopefully also give pictures on the LLS used by good language learners in learning English. Further, it is expected to help unsuccessful learners to learn from their friends, the successful ones, the better strategies to learn the language. By so doing, it is expected that they can learn English more successfully.

The third reason is, in relation to the 2004 English curriculum for junior high school, this study is directed to uncover if the frequently used LLS students apply are relevant to the strategic competence and attitude toward learning the language it proposes. Hopefully, the result of this study will help teachers to select the proper strategic competence from the curriculum to teach to their students. It is also hoped that teachers will find better ways to encourage their students to have better attitudes towards learning English. By applying appropriate language learning strategies and strategic competence and having a good attitude toward learning English, hopefully, students will be able to learn English better. Brown (1991:70) suggested that by adopting an effective set of personal strategies and having self-defines goals, someone can approach language learning with confidence and with the assurance that she/he will have at least some measure of success.

The findings of this study may also be used by textbook writers as well as the curriculum makers to design textbooks and curriculums that meet the students' LLS to boost their language learning outcome.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is restricted on the issue of language learning strategies that the junior high school students apply in learning English. This study further investigates the most frequent LLS applied by students categorized as good language learners that help them learn English effectively and to identify if there is a relationship between the LLS students apply with their achievement in learning the language. It is also to explore if students' frequently used LLS are relevant to the strategic competence and

positive attitude toward learning English proposed by 2004 English curriculum for the junior high school.

Since one purpose of this study is to find good language learners' LLS, the study is carried out in three classes in three best junior high schools based on their achievement in the National Examination (UN) in Cirebon. The schools are coded as SMP A, SMP B and SMP C. The participants involved are the students of the class 3E of SMP A, those of the class 3A of SMP B and those of the class 3E of SMP C.

1.6 Research Methodology

This study is to explore the most frequent LLS used by both the overall respondents and those categorized as good language learners, the correlation between student's LLS and their achievement in learning the language and the LLS that are relevant to strategic competence and attitude towards learning English proposed by the 2004 English curriculum. It employs the descriptive and correlative quantitative procedures. The descriptive procedure is used to investigate the most frequent LLS used by both the overall respondents and the students categorized as good language learners, and the frequently used LLS that are relevant to strategic competence and attitude towards learning English proposed by the 2004 English curriculum. Meanwhile, the correlation procedure is used to find the correlation between students' LLS and their achievement in learning the language. The Ex-post facto design is applied to explore this relation. Hatch and Farhady (1982) suggested that the design is often used when the researcher wants to look at the type and/or degree

of relationship between two variables. The data is then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 12.0.

The data in this study were collected through (1) questionnaire adapted from *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)* developed by Oxford (1990) to investigate students' learning strategies in learning English, (2) document analysis to find the students' achievement in learning English, and (3) interviews to get further information on the LLS students apply and to crosscheck the information obtained from the questionnaire. The methodology will be further discussed in chapter III.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized in five chapters. This 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 its findings. Finally, chapter five draws the conclusions and offers suggestions.