

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the general idea of the present study. The information covers the background of the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the hypothesis, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the research method, the clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1. Background of the Study

Vocational school is one of the educational agents in Indonesia. The general goal of this educational agent is to cultivate skillful human resources. Skillful human resources here mean the human resources who have a certain capability that can be a resource to compete in the work field. That is why the students of vocational school are educated and trained with professional skills which can be applied in the work field. They are expected to get involved competitively in the area of businesses, economics, and industries (Depdiknas, 2007). Since the global economy always progresses, it is very important that vocational students who are set to be professional middle workers for national and international companies or institutions need to have comprehensive English communicative competence for encountering the challenges of globalization.

Since English in Indonesia is treated as a foreign language, most of Indonesian students, particularly vocational students, feel that English language is difficult to learn. It happens because the students do not practice English language in their daily life. They find English only in the classroom which takes four hours

in a week (Puskur, 2009). This reality causes vocational students rarely use English as the language they use in daily communication. Consequently, the level of the students' English achievement or proficiency still needs to be apprehensive about.

The poorness of English proficiency of Indonesian vocational students is reported through the research conducted by *Pusat Pengembangan dan Pelatihan Guru Bahasa Inggris* (English Language Teacher Training and Development Center) in 2004. This research tested the English proficiency of 160 students from seven publically trusted vocational schools in Jakarta, Bogor, and Bandung through TOEIC test. The TOEIC test was employed because this test focuses more on business English which is appropriate to measure the English proficiency of the vocational students who are prepared for being a middle professional worker in business area. The result of this research indicated that only 40% of the students belonged to intermediate level and the rest were classified into elementary and novice level. It shows that the English proficiency level of Indonesian vocational students seems to require extra attention.

Learning a foreign language, the language which is not commonly used in daily life, certainly requires strategies so that good language proficiency can be achieved successfully. The strategies here mean specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, or planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information (Brown, 2001). Moreover, Oxford (1992) said that the appropriate strategies employed by the students will help out them in overcoming the obstacles or problems that the

students have in learning second or foreign language, and finally the appropriate employment of language learning strategies will lead the students to reach the target language mastery. In language studies, the strategies used by the language learners are called language learning strategies.

Language learning strategies are identified as specific actions, behaviors, actions, steps, or techniques that students often intentionally use to improve their progress in developing target language skills (Ghani, 2003). These strategies can ease the students to internalize, store, retrieve, or use the new language (Oxford, 1990). Language learning strategies not only help the students to process and use the language inputs but also lead the students to have learning autonomy. The learning autonomy will charge students' motivation in learning the target language outside the classroom. Oxford in Vidal (2002) stated that language learning strategies are a means to control and improve students' learning efforts for having communication ability. It means that language learning strategies are a key to emerge independence and more meaningful learning.

Each language learner applies different language learning strategies. Oxford (1990) stated that successful language learners have the ability to organize and combine particular types of language learning strategies in effective ways according to their own learning needs. Successful language learners also employ various types of learning strategies than do less successful learners (Oxford, 1993 in Kyung Ok, 2003). This idea is supported by Hismanoglu (2000) who said that the language learners who are able to apply appropriate and greater variation of language learning strategies will lead them to reach their learning goals

successfully. In line with this issue, Lengkanawati (2004) stated that the powerful role of learning strategies will result in improved students' learning outcomes. It means that the employment of various and appropriate learning strategies is needed by the language learners for reaching their main goal in learning language, namely good language achievements.

At least there are two studies which show that language learning strategies pay a powerful effect on successful language learning. The first study is the study conducted by Min-hsun Maggie Su in 2005. The result of this study revealed that there is strong correlation between EFL strategies frequencies and English proficiency level among 419 Taiwanese vocational college students who major in Foreign Languages in Taipei, Taiwan. In brief, this research agrees with the idea that the employment of proper language learning strategies and its frequencies enable the students to have the improvement of language proficiency. It is in line with the statement of Oxford (1990) who said that the use of appropriate language learning strategies will give an impact on the improved proficiency and greater self-confidence in language learning process.

The second study is the study carried out by Norman Fewell (2010) in Japan. This study was intended to find out the relationship between the utilization of language learning strategies and English language proficiency level. The sample group in this research was the first-year Japanese college students who enrolled in an English course at a university in Okinawa. The group consisted of 29 English majors (52%) and 27 Business majors (48%). The result of this research informs that appropriate utilization of language learning strategies

contributes 60% toward the success of students' language learning, and even it becomes a critical source in determining language learning success and failure.

Furthermore, gaining the information about language learning strategies employed by the students will make the language teachers know how their students approach the language tasks and even the problems that the students find in their language learning process. It certainly will ease the language teachers to design best language teaching strategies for their students, so that both the teacher's goals and the students' needs will meet in harmony (Brown, 2001). As a result, the students' language achievements can be gained as the teacher hopes.

In respect to the problems revealed above, and the facts that the students employ different preferences of language learning strategy, this study is intended to investigate the language learning strategies applied by one of the state vocational students in Bandung, and how those strategies correlate with the students' English proficiency as indicated by their WJEPT score. WJEPT (West Java English Proficiency Test) is a regional English proficiency test which has similar format to TOEIC test. It is designed for the twelfth grade students of vocational school in West Java.

1.2. Research Questions

This research was conducted mainly to answer the following questions:

1. What is the correlation between students' language learning strategies and their WJEPT scores?

2. What language learning strategies are often employed by the twelfth grade students of a state vocational school in Bandung?

1.3. Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions formulated above, the aims of this research are:

1. to examine the correlation between students' language learning strategies and their WJEPT scores.
2. to identify the language learning strategies which are mostly used by the twelfth grade students of a state vocational school in Bandung.

1.4. Hypothesis

Hypothesis is a statement about the probability of the research outcome (Sugiyono, 2007). The hypothesis proposed in this research is:

Ha : There is a correlation between students' language learning strategies and their WJEPT scores.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

In relation with the aims of the study described above, this study is limited only to investigate the correlation between the students' language learning strategies and the students' English proficiency as indicated by their WJEPT scores, and to identify the language learning strategies which are frequently used by the students.

1.6. Significance of the Study

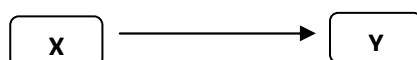
The result of this study can be a useful resource for the students to get the knowledge about the importance of applying appropriate language learning strategies in the process of learning a foreign language. The students' understanding about the essential of language learning strategies in learning a foreign language might be able to encourage the students to select and employ the language learning strategies which are suitable with their learning characteristic or their learning style. It is surely intended to abridge the students in meeting their language learning goals.

The result of this study also can bestow English teachers valuable information about how their students approach the language learning tasks. This information might be able to ease the teachers in designing learning activities which cover the diversity of the students' learning strategy. Thus, the learning goals that would be achieved are easy to gain.

1.7. Research Method

Correlational method was applied in this research. Arikunto (2002) affirmed that the correlational method is the method used in a research which has an attempt to find out the correlation or the relationship of two or more variables.

The paradigm raised in this research is:



(Sugiyono, 2007)

The research design used in this study is ex-post facto design. Syamsudin et al (2007) stated ex-post facto design is generally employed in correlation and causal-comparative study. He further explained that ex-facto design is a research design in which the variables observed in a research do not have any researcher's treatment and manipulation since the observed variables have happened before the research is conducted. Since the variable of language learning strategies and WJEPT scores do not get any treatment and manipulation, the ex-facto design is applicable in this study.

1.7.1. Population and Sample

The population of this study is the twelfth grade students of a state vocational school in Bandung who enrolled in academic year 2010/2011. The number of the population was 420 who came from four different majors: welding engineering, machinery design engineering, computer network engineering, and machine engineering. 105 Of 420 students were selected to be the sample of this study. They were chosen as the sample of this study because they had taken WJEPT program.

1.7.2. Data Collection

There are two variables which were observed in this study. Those variables are variable X and variable Y. Variable X stands for students' language learning strategies and variable Y stands for students' WJEPT scores. To gather the data which cover the two variables observed in this study, some research

instruments were employed. Each research instrument used in this study is explained as follow:

1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a means to collect the data about the students' frequency in using the language learning strategies. The questionnaire used in this study was adopted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for ESL/EFL version 7.0, a self-reporting questionnaire constructed by Oxford (1990) to measure the intensity of language learning strategies employed by the language learners who learn English as a foreign or second language. The SILL questionnaire was translated into Indonesian language to make the students easier in understanding each statement provided in the questionnaire.

2. English Proficiency Documentary

English proficiency documentary is a means to collect the data about the students' level of English proficiency as indicated by their WJEPT scores. WJEPT is a regional English proficiency test which measures general English ability of vocational students in West Java. This test has similar format to Test English for International Communication (TOEIC). WJEPT is designed by Vocational English Teacher Association (VETA) which has been legitimated by Education Department of West Java since 2006.

3. Interview

The instrument of interview was employed to be a means for collecting more detail data about the students' language learning strategies which cannot be obtained from the instrument of questionnaire.

1.7.3. Data Analysis

Some data analysis procedures had been taken for answering the research questions proposed in this study. The procedures are presented as follow:

1. After testing the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, the data gained from questionnaire were processed by employing four steps such as classifying the statements into categories, tabulating the score of each questionnaire item, calculating the total score of each language learning strategy categories, and interpreting the score.
2. The data about the students' WJEPT scores were collected from the English teachers who teach the twelfth grade students. The collected WJEPT scores were organized following the steps: tabulating the scores into table, categorizing students' English proficiency level based on the criteria composed by VETA, and interpreting the data.
3. To find out the correlation between variable X (LLS) and variable Y (WJEPT scores), some statistical procedures had been taken. Those statistical procedures were:
 - a. Examining the normality and linearity of each variable;

- b. Seeking the correlation coefficient of the two variables (SILL and WJEPT scores) by employing Pearson Product Moment formula as stated below:

$$r = \frac{N\Sigma XY - (\Sigma X)(\Sigma Y)}{\sqrt{N\Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2} \sqrt{N\Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2}}$$

(Sugiyono, 2007)

- c. Testing the hypothesis of this study, and
- d. Interpreting the result.
4. To discover what language learning strategies which are mostly used by the students, the mean score of each category of language learning strategies was compared one another.
5. All the computed data was analyzed by using descriptive statistic.

1.8. Clarification of Terms

The following are some terms which need to clarify in order to avoid misinterpretation:

1. Language learning strategies are the techniques used by the students in learning English language.
2. SILL stands for Strategy Inventory Language Learning Strategy version 7.0 composed by Oxford (1990). It is a self-reporting questionnaire to measure the students' intensity in employing language learning strategies.

3. Language Proficiency is the degree of language skills measured with a certain language test, in this case is WJEPT.
4. WJEPT (West Java English Proficiency Test) is a standardized regional English proficiency test which has similar format to TOEIC test. It is designed for the twelfth grade students of vocational school in West Java.

1.9. Organization of the Paper

This paper is reported following these paper organization below:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter provides the research background, statement of problems, aims of the study, significance of the study, research method, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II: Theoretical Foundation

This chapter cites related theory as the basis of the research's investigation and relevant research which are used to support the research investigation.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter presents detail research methodology which consists of research design, participant of the research, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses results and findings of the research and analysis them to answer the formulated research questions.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides conclusions of the research and some suggestions for English learners and English teacher, and also future research.

