

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

“The results of previous studies on second/foreign language learning indicate that language learning strategies play an influential role in the process of language learning” (Zare, 2012: 162). These strategies help them in studying language more effectively and overcoming their problems by themselves. By using strategies, they can work out the answers and solutions, as well as managing their own learning. It is by nature that strategies are utilised as helping tools or aids to students’ language learning especially in developing communicative competence. In this case, it can result in improved proficiency and better self-confidence. As an example, some students might be aware of the learning strategies and their importance while most of the others are not. Thus, students who are aware will certainly try to combine and find the best strategies they may implement in a certain condition. “These particular students are likely to be using a wide variety of language learning strategies and are probably on the way to becoming autonomous self-regulated learners” (Oxford, 1999: 109). Otherwise, the rest of the students will implement only a limited number of strategies, most likely because they are unaware of the strategies itself.

Moreover, language learning deals with four aspects considered as the core of every language, they are: speaking, writing, reading and listening. Listening as a receptive aspect will be chosen to be the focused aspect of the study because it is believed that for most of EFL students, listening is the most frustrating and

problematic one due to the fact that universities pay more attention to grammar, reading and vocabulary (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011:978). Despite of being problematic, listening is very important in language learning especially for EFL students. Before the EFL students can speak the language, it is necessary to know how the language is spoken by listening to the spoken language itself. In order to solve the complexity in listening, helping tools are to be utilized, in this case language learning strategies. Variations in language learning strategies can serve as a helpful feature since students may choose and decide the suitable strategies they need in order to solve the problem they face in listening, or even better to improve their listening skill.

From a long time ago, researchers around the world have tried to describe and expose about language learning strategies implemented by different types of subjects (e.g. Chang, 1991; Goh & Kwah, 1997; Green & Oxford, 1995; Phillips, 1991; Rao, 2006; Rubin, 1975; Sheorey, 1999; Teng, 1998; Wharton, 2000). A research was conducted by Teng on 51 students of National Yunlin University of Science and Technology in Taiwan where he came to a conclusion that compensation strategies has the highest average frequency among 6 different types of strategies (Teng, 1998: 5). On the contrary, an earlier research by Vandergrift found that his subjects, high school students in Core French implemented cognitive strategies the most compared to 2 other strategies (Vandergrift, 1997: 396). However, a more recent study by Chang with his subject 360 undergraduate foreign language majors at a university in central Taiwan resulted a very similar description with Teng in which compensation strategies are the frequently implemented

strategies (Chang, 2011: 206). Those research reported about variations of sample and result underlining the importance of language learning strategies.

In order to gain prior information about current situation of the participants regarding language learning strategies and listening skill, an informal interview was conducted. As the result of the interview, it is known that a phenomena of unawareness of language learning strategies and having difficulties in listening skill occur among the fourth semester students. Problems such as the lacking vocabularies or even being unable to focus and concentrate during listening are the most common ones in listening skill case. Furthermore, to relate with language learning strategies as helping tool, ten fourth semester students were asked about their resolutions to deal with their difficulties in listening. All of them provided almost the same answer which is by listening musics and watching movies in English. The answer given can be considered as the use of language learning strategies in their listening skill. However, their strategy use was too limited, not to mention that the term and wide range of language learning strategies itself is yet to be known by the fourth semester students.

Although many researchers have described the use of language learning strategies (e.g. Chang, 1991; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1999; Phillips, 1991; Rao, 2006; Teng, 1998; Wharton, 2000), few have studied strategies in language learning implemented in listening skill. Furthermore, the phenomena of lacking awareness of language learning strategies, let alone using them in listening occurs in the participants of the study. To complement the previous studies and to describe the use of language learning strategies in listening skill, the researcher conducted a

study on the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program in IKIP PGRI Pontianak. Therefore, this study was considered crucial not only because such study has never been conducted in Pontianak, but also because of the characteristics of the participants in the present study.

B. Research Question

Based on the background of this study, these following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the strategies implemented by fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Pontianak in listening skill?
2. What are the frequently used strategies of fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Pontianak in listening skill?

C. Research Purpose

In this study, the researcher described the use of strategies in learning English listening skill. Specifically this study aimed:

1. To find out the types of strategies implemented by fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Pontianak in English listening skill.
2. To find out the frequently used strategy of fourth semester students of English Language Department of IKIP PGRI Pontianak in English listening skill.

D. Scope of the Research

In current study the researcher investigated the use of strategies in learning English listening of fourth semester students of English Education Department. It is believed that fourth semester is the optimal level of since the students have been able to adapt with higher education learning after a 1-year-study they have passed.

1. Research Variable

A variable is a characteristic or attribute that varies (Lodico et.al, 2010: 24). In this research a single variable was set, that was language learning strategies in English listening skill.

2. Terminology

The following definitions were provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study:

a. Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies are helping tools in which help enhancing students' language learning to accomplish language learning competences.

b. Listening skill

Listening skill is a skill of language in which the listener needs to understand and comprehend the message delivered orally by the speaker, by paying attention to every aspects of the message itself.

c. Fourth Semester Students

The fourth semester students are students who have passed three semesters in their study.

E. Significance of the Research

The present research would benefit in the following aspects:

1. Theoretical Benefits

In theoretical field, the study added more information and knowledge about language learning strategies in listening skill since the characteristics of the proposed sample has yet to be studied on before.

2. Practical Benefits

a. To Participants

The result would help students in knowing more about themselves as language learner. Moreover, this study provided information and inventory in using strategy in language learning . Thus, it increased students' awareness of the language learning strategies especially in listening skill.

b. To Lecturers

This study served as a valuable source of information for lecturers to understand about language learning strategies their students implement. The lecturers might use it in determining the best method in teaching that probably would suit their students the most.

c. To Researchers

As for researchers, this study served as the first step in exploring about language learning strategies employed by students who have special characteristics which make them different from all previous study. Later on, the result would help the development of existing theory about language learning strategies because it could be used as an additional information and data from the aspect of EFL students.

