CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains background of the study, research problem, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms which become the basis of this research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language acquisition had become a common topic discussed by many language researchers. Since First Language Acquisition (FLA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are different process, the factors influencing those process are also different (Ghazali, 2006; Ipek, 2009; Nemati and Taghizadeh, 2013). So did the factors that influence the process of vocabulary acquisition. However, they are interrelated each other. It means that the factors influencing FLA or SLA, such as age, motivation, first language (L1) background, and learning strategy, can also have impact on vocabulary acquisition, vice versa. This research was conducted to analyze the role of learning strategy in vocabulary acquisition, the strategy that most frequently used, and the reason for certain learning strategies to be chosen.

Basically, acquisition is the process of 'acquiring'. Consequently, in term of language, acquisition can be meant as the process of acquiring language. However, researchers had different opinion in interpreting the term 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Some researchers interpreted the term acquisition as the process of getting, obtaining, or achieving – in this case, language – that could be from either conscious or unconscious process (Collier, 1988; Pigada

and Schmitt, 2006). On the other side, Abukhattala (2013) and Rafik (2005) made distinctions between acquisition and learning that acquisition was a subconscious process based on the use of language in informal situation for meaningful communication such as daily conversation when the users did not focus on form of the languages while learning was a conscious process which took place in contexts which there was conscious attention on the structure of language. In this research, the researcher referred to the interpretation which both were equal.

Language acquisition, furthermore, can be divided into two kinds; First Language Acquisition (FLA) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). FLA is the acquisition process of first language (L1), that is, the languages which were acquired during the childhood from people in the vicinity and spoken in the home environment. Whereas SLA is the process of acquiring second language (L2). It refers to the additional language which is acquired after first language. Even though it may be actually the third, fourth, or tenth to be acquired. (Saville-Troike, 2006). Additionally, there is the process of acquiring vocabulary which is called as vocabulary acquisition.

Many language researchers agreed that L2 is the language that is acquired subsequent to the L1. The existence of the prefix 'second' makes it refers to any language that is learned after the mother tongue. Thus, it can refer to the third, fourth, even tenth language (Ortega, 2013; Saville-Troike, 2006). Also, 'second' was not intended to contrast with 'foreign' (Ellis, 1997). Nevertheless, some researchers argued that not all languages which were acquired after the L1 can be called as L2. There must be a clear distinction

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between L2 and foreign language (FL). Laraba (2007) argued that L2 must not only learned after the mother tongue but also has some specific functions within a multilingual society or minority groups whilst FL refers to the one which has no internal function in the learner's country and was learnt in order to interact with native speakers or inter-language users of the foreign language.

In addition to first and second language acquisition, there was also vocabulary acquisition which was not less important. Vocabulary acquisition becomes an essential part of language acquisition since no one – even with perfect grammar skill – can convey message without any vocabulary. Vocabulary is needed to express ide and to understand other people's utterance (Alqahtani, 2015). Knight (in Yoshii and Flaitz, 2002) stated that learning words can be considered to be the most important aspect of SLA.

There were many factors influencing the SLA and vocabulary acquisition. Age is one of the factors that is considered as a major variable affecting the process of SLA (Collier, 1988; Gömleksiz, 2001; Khasinah, 2014; Krashen, 2004; Lin, 2014; Rafik, 2005). There is also first language (L1) background that takes an important role in vocabulary acquisition (Krashen, 1981; Lin, 2014; Nazary, 2008). On the other side, motivation is regarded as one of the crucial factors affecting the process of vocabulary acquisition (Khasinah, 2014; Laraba, 2007; Gömleksiz, 2001; Li, 2009; Lin-Fang, 2013). Furthermore, Abhakorn (2008), Lin (2014), and Zare (2012) declared learning strategies as imperative and influential factor in the process of vocabulary acquisition.

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One of the researches in learning strategies has been done by Azumi (2008). His research uses a classification made by Shirahata et al. (in Azumi, 2008) which classify learning strategies into two major classes; direct and indirect strategies, and six groups; cognitive, memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. (See figure 1)

Figure 1: Shirahata's classification of learning strategies

He conducted his research on 148 students enrolled in liberal arts English classes in a university in Iwate, Japan. He divided language learners into three categories based on the score of 'Test of English as a Foreign Language Instructional Testing Program level 2 test (TOEFL ITP)' which were elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

In his research, he found that advanced students used more strategies than intermediate students. The intermediate students used more strategies than elementary students. Yet, the pattern of the six strategies used in three different classes were almost the same. He also mentioned that the strategy that the most widely used was the same; translating (cognitive). However, he did not analyze the reason they choose their strategies.

By this research, the researcher does not only analyze the role of learning strategy in vocabulary acquisition and look for the strategy that most

frequently used but also find out the reason of each subject in choosing the strategies. The finding of this research is hoped to deepen the results of studies conducted on learning strategies factor in vocabulary acquisition. Thus, both bilingual and multilingual learners were expected to get direction from this study to get efficient way in acquiring L2 vocabulary.

1.2 Research Problems

The research problems were as formulated in the following questions:

1. What strategies are mostly used by the students?

2. What are their reasons for choosing those strategies?

3. How does each of the learning strategies take role in learners' vocabulary acquisition?

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study is conducted to achieve following objectives:

1. To know strategies that are often preferred by the students.

2. To know the reasons for those strategies to be chosen by subjects.

3. To find the way each learning strategy used takes role in learners' vocabulary acquisition.

4. To find the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy.

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1.4 Significance of the Study

The generalization of this present study would be a great contribution to the vast knowledge in relation to learning strategy, language acquisition, and vocabulary acquisition. Fundamental results of this research could be highly significant and advantageous specifically to the following:

- **Bilingual and Multilingual Learner:** this study is expected to help L2 learner to find more effective, efficient, and suitable strategies to acquire L2 vocabulary.

- **Language Researcher:** this study is hoped to supply more and new information for both language learner and researcher to improve their view about language acquisition and vocabulary acquisition, especially language learning strategies.

- **Filling Gap of Previous Research:** this study is intended to fill the gap of previous research discussed in the background so there will be an enlightenment regarding strategy in vocabulary acquisition.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This research is conducted to identify the way each vocabulary learning strategy takes role in vocabulary acquisition process and recognize the advantage and disadvantage of each learning strategies and the reason why learner choose their strategies. Furthermore, this research will only include strategies that were classified into six classes as stated by Shirahata et al. (in Azumi, 2008); cognitive, memory, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

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However, there were some limitations in this research. First, the subjects were only male students whereas male and female may have different way of learning language so that the result may be different for female students. Second, this research was conducted to inspect strategies used for acquiring vocabulary. On the other side, the strategy that usually used by subjects to learn grammar or other aspects of language might be different.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

a. **Language acquisition**

Language acquisition is an ability to innate language that has hard-wired into human brain (Randall, 2007).

b. **Vocabulary acquisition**

Vocabulary acquisition is the ability of acquiring vocabulary. It can be by either listening or reading.

c. **Learning strategies**

Learning strategies are ability or skill used by learners to intake, store, and retrieve during the learning process (Lee, 2010).