

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents several topics related to the study, including the background of study, research question, the objective of study, the significance of study, scope, and delimitation of the study.

Research Background

In Indonesia, Being English learners is challenging because English is our foreign language instead of second language. In addition, many complexities are required to be mastered in order to deliver ideas correctly. The learners of English as a Foreign Language certainly experience many obstacles during their learning process. This is because they must master new vocabularies and how to construct words or sentences grammatically.

As students of English Department, several subjects and topics are given by lecturers, so that the students can achieve their particular goals. These subjects consist of skills, such as listening - reading (receptive skills) and speaking - writing (productive skills) along with Grammar, English Morphology, Semantics, Phonology, Syntax, and others. Students should take all of these subjects in order to go further to the next semester, and not to mention that most of those subjects are requisite ones, meaning that the students cannot enroll in the next semester if they do not pass the previous subject. Regarding this, it is a must for them to master every subject they take.

Looking at those subjects of English, Syntax is a study on grammar which concerns with how words are ordered to construct a sentence. Crane, et al (1981, p.102) stated that syntax is the way of words put together to form phrases and sentences. Thus, Syntax can be given the following

characterization. As noted by Matthews (1982, p.1), the term ‘syntax’ is from the Ancient Greek which means a verbal noun, and literally means ‘arrangement’ or ‘setting out together’.

Traditionally, it refers to the branch of grammar dealing with the ways in which words, with or without appropriate inflections, are arranged to show connections of meaning within the sentence. In syntax, the concepts of a noun phrase, verb phrase and other terms are used to differentiate kind of those aforementioned parts of speech. Based the definitions from the experts, it can be concluded that syntax is the study of internal structure of sentences. In this case, it explains how words are arranged to become phrases and clauses for constructing a sentence. It is commonly called as a structure by which it manages how words can be combined with other ones to create a good sentence.

Furthermore, based on the preliminary interview with one of the students of the class of 2015, English Department, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo who had taken Syntax course; Syntax was very useful for students in the fifth semester, although some obstacles were encountered during the learning process. Another student stated that the obstacle or problem faced in learning syntax was the lack of understanding the material. Moreover, the students did not use learning strategies or any methods in studying in class, especially when the lecturer was unable to come to the class and they were required to learn independently. There were some topics that require a detailed explanation by the lecturer, particularly in the translation of sentence structures that have several phrases in it as it difficult for the students to describe it one by one.

Therefore, this research has identified the problem faced by the students in which they are less aware of the importance of learning strategies in learning grammatical subjects of English (linguistic), Syntax in particular. They tend to depend on the explanations and exercises given by the lecturer, whereas the lecturer often emphasizes merely on the delivery of learning content,

yet he does not encourage and lead the students to develop strategies in learning Syntax. As a result, students are not directly aware that there are actually various grammatical learning strategies they can choose and do. Besides, Schmidt as cited in Cohen and Macaro (2007) argued that students of English Education Study Program have not had a high awareness or intense of applying certain English grammatical (linguistic) learning strategies.

As teachers, instead of relying on their preferred teaching style, they should understand that one style of instruction may not meet the needs of all students. Students are different in the way they approach the learning process and deal with a variety of learning activities (Callahan, Clark, & Kellough, 2002). A good way to have teachers consider individual learning differences and recognize the needs to modify their own teaching style is to have them learn from the students' perspective. Hence, learning strategies can be procedures that facilitate a learning task as also confirmed by Grenfell & Harris, 1999 as cited in Chamot (2005, p.112). Strategies are most often conscious and goal-driven, especially in the beginning stages of tackling an unfamiliar language task. Once a learning strategy becomes familiar through repeated use, it may be used with some automaticity, but most learners will, if required, be able to call the strategy to conscious awareness.

Intellectual people need to have a strategy or a particular way to understand something more structured, and thus, a diary can be the alternative way to achieve such things. On the other hand, at English Department, there is a diary usually used in Syntax course as a learning strategy. This diary serves as a learning strategy in which it becomes students' activity when coming to the class. It contains students' initial understanding of Syntax material written on a paper, and will be submitted before or after the lesson, which later will assist them during the learning process or ongoing discussion. It also helps students be well-prepared in the classroom.

On that ground, this diary can be the learning strategy that can be used by students to write material or events that considered important. This can be a method for students in writing while overcoming their difficulties when they are trying to write something more structured. This strategy also automatically can help students understand and remember the provided material. This strategy can be applied by other lecturers who teach Syntax, Grammar, and other linguistic courses to help students be well-prepared in the classroom. Further, a diary is the strategy when students will utilize a small book as self-reports to write down the important material related to the subject long before the lessons are discussed. The material is unlimited as long as it relates to the subject that will be discussed later. Additionally, Chamot (2005, p. 114) suggested that by using diaries for instructional purposes, it can help students develop metacognitive awareness of their own learning processes and strategies.

Consequently, a diary can be implemented as the strategy in teaching and learning process to enhance students' knowledge and to prepare them before lessons in order that the material will be further expanded in the class. The problem is that not every lecturer knows how to use a diary in their class session. The lack of information is what drives the researcher to conduct this research. Therefore, this research will discuss how a diary as the learning strategy can affect students' ability. The purpose of this research is to explore students' perception when the diary is implemented in the class.

Moreover, investigating students' perception on the use of the diary as learning strategy of Syntax also provides a positive impact for lecturers and students, such as enhancing the effectiveness and creativity in teaching and learning process, especially at English Department. Likewise, this will contribute and will be helpful for further researchers or even can be a solution for teachers and lecturers to use it as their learning strategies in linguistic courses and Syntax.

The implementation of a learning strategy for English grammar has been one of the important issues in English teaching field, particularly in syntax course. This is because students have less understanding about certain topics that will be taught by the lecturer. Therefore, this research is required to be conducted in order to explore students' interests towards the diary as the learning strategy applied in the classroom. This research also aims to provide the effectiveness of the strategy and to find out whether or not the strategy gets a positive response from students. In conducting this research, the researcher explored the perception of students who have applied a diary as the learning strategy in the classroom. Furthermore, this research was conducted at students of English Department, class of 2015.

Research Question

Based on the background of the study, this research formulates a problem statement as follow;

“What are the students' perceptions on the use of diary as the strategy in learning Syntax?”

Research Objective

This study aims to elaborate the students' perception on the implementation of diary as the learning strategy of Syntax course.

Research Significances

Here are some significances of this study:

- For students

This research is expected to provide benefits for students to utilize diary strategy in Syntax or any foreign language courses and it can be their further references in conducting such a correlated paper or research.

- For Lecturers

By this research, this research expects that other lecturers of English Department, particularly for those who teach linguistics specifically Grammar or Syntax, can use diary as the learning strategy to increase students' knowledge about the courses and also can minimize students' difficulties in learning Syntax. The lecturers can see students' progress through their diary.

The Scope of Study

This study would focus on exploring students' perception on the implementation of diary as the linguistic learning strategy of Syntax course. However, this research will only focus on English Department students especially those who are in the fifth semester. Thus, the existence of other problems will not be a concern. Therefore, the indicators observed is according to Bimo Walgito (1990, p. 54-55) which are; absorption, understanding, and evaluation. These indicators will be a benchmark of this research about students' perception. Besides, the type of diary used by this research is a semi-structured diary. It is because the use of the diary related to this research means that the students write their initial understanding about Syntax material that has been given in the syllabus.