

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter researcher identified the Background of the Study, Research Question, Purpose of the Study, and Significant of Study.

### **1. Background of the Study**

The freshman year has long been known to be a critical time in the lives of students. It is a time of transition and adjustment to the social and academic demands of college, a time when the likelihood of dropout and the possibility of transformative learning is greatest (Tinto, Goodsell; 1994:6). For institutions, the freshman year is also a period during which programs can have the greatest impact on subsequent student development and persistence. Research studies and policy reports alike have long supported the notion that the potential benefits of programmatic efforts on behalf of student development and persistence are the greatest during that year. This is the case because the majority of dropouts either occur in the first year or have their roots in the first year experience.

But while the growth of freshman year programs is a welcomed development in higher education, there is still room for improvement. There remain a number of significant issues about the character and role of such programs in the university that have yet to be resolved. Among them is the issue of the freshman year programs in the enhancing student' language skills. Despite recent developments, it is still the case that most freshman year programs focus either on the transition to college and the need for orientation that it engenders

and/or on the acquisition of minimum learning skills required for participation in the regular curriculum (Gordon, 1989:183-197). While it is true that these programs have done much to change the way some students experience their first year of college, it is also true that first year programs have not yet fully addressed the important language skills questions that confront faculty, namely: How can academic programs facilitate the language skills of first year students and more actively engage them in the educational process?

Then, modern approaches to methodology for the teaching and learning of English (and other languages) have to develop high levels of macro language skills (Hinkel, 2010:23). In a practical sense, one of the most crucial part of learning English is to master the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Oxford, 2001:1). Every skill is important because it has its own purposes in communication. Nunan (2003: 48) divides the skills into two parts, they are reading and listening as receptive skill, and speaking and writing as productive skill. Productive skill is the way of someone to produce language in spoken or writing communication while receptive skill is the ways of someone extract meaning from a course they see or hear. In other words, freshmen will engage in reading and writing activities to reinforce their oral/aural skills.

In English Department of UNJ, there are several subjects dedicated to enhance the freshman macro skills, which are: English for Interpersonal Communication, English Grammar for Interpersonal and Social Communication, and Diction in Discourse. Moreover, the EFL professionals agreed that the freshmen have to attend to the practice of the four primary skills of listening,

reading, speaking and writing because acquiring a new language necessarily involves developing these four modalities in varying degrees and combinations (Oxford, 1990: 5-6). Then, if these four skills also include associated skills (e.g: knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning, and usage), it can lead to effective EFL communication when all the skills are interwoven during instruction. If these language skills are effectively interwoven, EFL freshmen are likely to become communicatively competent.

In addition, the language skills class itself also shares the same responsibility to develop the students language skills. The language skills class needs to attend to all of its components: organization, pragmatic, strategic and even psychomotor strategies (Bachman 1990: 87; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, Thurrell 1995: 17). According to Brown (2000: 29), communicative goals are best achieved by giving attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to the students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

Based on previous studies (Ryczek, 2012: 53-77), it was found that too often Asian freshmen who are new to the language skills activity in an English language class claim, "I can't do it. I don't know English." This explanation may be frustrating to teachers and demotivating for the student, and demonstrates a limited or simplified view of the English language by the student. This type of claim conveys an overall sense that the student has already given up and that any help offered by the teacher will be of little use. This leads to the possibility of English Department freshmen may also feel the same thing towards the language

skills courses. Furthermore, approaching the English language, or any foreign language, as a unified dichotomy between “knowing” and “not knowing” may seem misguided from the teacher’s perspective, while many freshmen this may seem a natural and unchangeable feature of language learning. In English Department itself, there was only one study related to the language skills subjects which investigated it in ELESP subjects (Fajar:2009), the results shown that the language skills course were appropriate with the students’ need and gave them a professional competence to communicate in English both spoken and written. The students have positive perception toward language skills course, and it was implemented well.

Because the lack of previous studies investigated about the language skills subjects was focus on language skills subjects and the one who focused on freshman are still left unrevealed. By using Ittelson’s concept of perspective (in Carmona et al, 2003: 693), which identifies it as cognitive, emotional, interpretive, and appreciative, the writer intended to shed some light on freshmen perspective toward the four skills in the English language skills class in English Department of UNJ.

## **1.2 Research Question**

- a. What is the freshmen perception toward language skills (speaking, listening, writing, reading) subjects (English for Interpersonal Communication, English for Interpersonal and Social Communication, and Diction in Discourse) offered by English Department of UNJ?

- b. What is the freshmen perception toward the syllabuses of the language skill subjects (English for Interpersonal Communication, English Grammar for Interpersonal and Social Communication, and Diction in Discourse) in English Department of UNJ?

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

This study is about to be limited to freshmen perception on language skills courses offered by freshmen.

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

- a. To describe freshmen perception toward language skills subjects offered by English Department of UNJ.
- b. To describe freshmen perception toward the syllabus of language skills subjects in English Department of UNJ.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research result is intended to be reference for the curriculum planner and the decision makers in developing the curriculum of freshmen in the future. The result is also expected to be used as preliminary information to other researchers who are interested to conduct further research in the same field. Theoretically, in addition, the result of the study can be a positive input for the programs applied by English Department.