

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

English is an international language. It is communicated in most areas in both spoken and written. It is used as the tool of communication in many areas such as in politic, economy, education and so on. In written communication most of information sources are in English. It can be found in various books, newspaper, magazine, and electronic media (Rao, 2019: 66). These conditions make English become important to be considered. It means that all the people in the world have to be able to communicate in English. At least those people can understand the meaning of information when they read or listen in English. In improving knowledge of English, the Indonesia government decides to make it becomes a compulsory subject at school. It is one of compulsory language subject which learnt at any level of school apart from Indonesia language. It has been released at 1994 curriculum. It means that English has essential role in Indonesia at the school subjects. The role of English in Indonesia is at the education setting. In another words it is learnt as foreign language in Indonesia (Rao, 2019: 10 and Silalahi, 2018: 992). In learning foreign language, the students face new linguistic system. It makes the learners learn new and complex component of English. This case makes learners face ambiguity situations. It is caused by novelty and complexity.

Ambiguity situation in English as foreign language (EFL) may be happened based on multiple meaning, vagueness, incompleteness, probability, unstructured, lack of information, uncertainty, inconsistencies, and unclear. These ambiguity situations are not able to be avoided when learning English. It is because they are commonly happened in EFL as the presence of new linguistic cues. In English proficiency these ambiguity situations must be tackled by using innovative and creative probability. Ambiguity situations can be tackled by interpretation of information in patience and comfort. When the learners have some activities or ways to overcome those ambiguity situations they are enjoy and wish to learn new things. In another words ambiguity situations impact beneficial to encourage the learners to be curios (Vahid, Kashani, and Haddadi, 2011: 151).

Referring to these ambiguity situations, the research on EFL is necessary to be done. It is in order to introduce kinds of ambiguity situations in EFL learning. The spread information of EFL ambiguity will help the learners to know them. By knowing kinds of ambiguity, it will not be a strange thing for EFL learners. When the learners often face variety information of EFL ambiguity it will make them to be accustomed to those ambiguities and then they will not be startled anymore. Meanwhile the learners have to be able to tolerate those ambiguity situations in EFL. Tolerance of ambiguity is one of the learning succeed techniques. Tolerance of ambiguity makes the learners to be patience to think the solution of making clear understanding. It is said by the reason that tolerance ambiguity is one of characteristic of good language learners (Nguyen and Terry, 2017: 5). Tolerate means the learners behave enjoy or patience to think and do some activities to overcome those ambiguities to have proficiency. The EFL learners with tolerance

of ambiguity are those who are able to create learning in full of joy situations. The enjoyable situation will help EFL learners to improve learning mastery. It is because they can use their creative thinking well without under pressure.

Related to EFL ambiguity situations, there is commonly issue that EFL learners face difficulties or trouble in learning. It is caused by both cultural knowledge and linguistic input which often have uncertain condition so in EFL learning process ambiguity situations are not avoided but encountered because their final target is mastery (Rao, 2019: 10). In line with this a research by Shak in 2015 found that diploma students who learn English as Second Language (ESL) in Perak has trouble. The trouble in this research is explained that students have low scores even though English has been learnt at school for two decades. Low understanding is also measured from senior managers companies who are poor command English language which was the main factor that caused undergraduates to remain jobless. This condition can be happened to all the students who study ESL. It is based on EFL input. The input may as the sets of rules and formulas that must be followed rigidly in which no fund and varieties are allowed. Another cause is multiple meaning so the learners have different perspective in get understanding (Shak, 2015: 47).

The ambiguity situations in EFL learning impact some difficulties in constructing meaning. It means that multi meaning of interpretation due to the inadequacy of linguistic cues can be happened. To get success in EFL learning, the learner are suggested not to be dodge from but they have try to be patience with the ambiguity situations. The learners with patience in EFL ambiguity situations means that they tolerate the ambiguity. It is the essential way or the

strategy to make them feel comfort to make clear understanding the EFL ambiguity situations. In another words tolerance of ambiguity (TOA) can facilitate language learning (Basoz, 2015: 52). Learning EFL is akin to explore an unknown land as ambiguous situation are prevalent in language learning. So it is needed the degree to which you are cognitively willing to tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to your own belief system or structure of knowledge (Basoz, 2015: 53).

EFL ambiguity situations make exciting for some learners whereas for others make them to be frustration in learning. The learners with TOA presume EFL ambiguity situations are exciting. They tolerate EFL ambiguity situations through comprehending novel lexical item or even situations. Meanwhile if EFL ambiguity situations are not tolerated in a reasonable manner, they may cause a high level of stress in learners and negatively affect language learning (Basoz, 2015: 54). Based on these situations TOA is essential role in EFL learning. It purposes to create relax or full of joy in learning of EFL. This way helps EFL learners to improve proficiency because they are creative to do activities to overcome the ambiguity. In another word, students who have high level of TOA are those who have the ability to deal with uncertainty in a more comfortable way rather than the students having low tolerant (Gulten, 2016: 137). Additionally, EFL learners who have low of TOA might be anxiety. In EFL learning, facing too much new information and contradiction, the learners sometimes might be led to strong negative affective reactions such as anxiety.

Ambiguity situations of EFL potentially occur with respect to kinds of different situations that have been mention previously. Then EFL ambiguity

situations may be understood simply based on the terms of novelty, complexity, insolubility, and lack of structure (Hakki, Ismail, Erten and Topkaya 2009: 30). When these conditions are supposed as the problem, the learners have to seek the ways to overcome those situations. They have to find their learning strategy or way in comprehending English. It is because the role of English very essential to understand information which is spread of in English as has been stated in previous paragraph.

In learning EFL the learners have to feel comfort to make them to feel at home. The way of making learning comfort is come from learners themselves cognitively. In another word in can be understood as cognitive strategy where the learners manipulate directly about learning material and situation to be felt at home. Manipulating learning material and situation can be done based the needs. The learner will be persistent to learn when they realize that they need it. It is one of the principles to get succeed in English mastery (Brown, 2016:124-125). This way or strategy makes them comfort with various situations in learning EFL.

EFL learners with TOA feel comfort with the kinds of ambiguity whether are caused by the novelty, insolubility, and lack of structure. More than that TOA integrates the learners' basic quality of creativity and humour to keep balance between resistance and adaptation. It means that TOA is essential in learning because it control the tendency to jump directly to easy, simple, and unambiguous solutions upon encountering unfamiliar and difficult task (Genc, 2016: 137).

TOA is concerned to improve EFL proficiency for Indonesian learners as it facilitates learning. TOA facilitates learning to make important decisions since decision-making process requires generating, evaluating, selecting and

implementing solutions (Genc, 2016: 137-138). With these facilitations, EFL learners with TOA are indicated optimistic and innovative in tackling ambiguity situations. For those EFL learners with low level of TOA tend to interpret an ambiguous situation as a threat or a source of discomfort.

Learners with TOA do not mind taking risk. Individual's TOA is an important capacity of being creative in learning (McLain, Kefallonitis and Armani 20015:2). It means that in learning EFL the learners are needed to have TOA to tackle the anxiety and uncertainty which is supposed as the source of learning failures. With having TOA the learners feel comfort and calm in learning EFL. Feeling comfort and calm as the product of TOA make the learners being confidence. It is because TOA facilitates the learners to open to various alternatives and avoid insisting on a single option (Genc, 2016:138). It will help them to achieve the success in learning EFL. It must be considered well by learners (Jong and Ozcan, 2016: 27).

EFL learning ambiguity can be in the classroom with a group of learners or individually when learner engages in self-instructed language study. The learners can succeed when they have level of TOA since moderate up to high (Genc, 2016: 138). It also refers to language ambiguity elements. EFL ambiguity elements can be differentiated based on its types. It concerns to phonetic, grammatical, meaning and lexical types which make two or more meaning in different perspective (Jowkar and Khajehie, 2017:15).

In improving English proficiency, a good learner is needed to have a good degree of tolerance in facing ambiguity. It is supported by Shak (2015: 48) who state that "TOA is a person's ability to function rationally and calmly in a

situation in which interpretation of all stimuli is not clear". Otherwise individuals who have low of tolerance will get simple way in learning English. Technically they will take black and white way or jump into the conclusion without taking any time to consider all of the essential elements of unclear situation. It means that low of TOA will impede English learning. Referring to this explanation, TOA can be understood as English learning strategy or way as realization some probabilities (Grenier and Ladouceur, 2005: 594).

In improving English proficiency, TOA as the realization of strategy or way is needed to be concerned as the most or some of time the teacher is physically absent, the learners are required to take a degree of responsibility to their learning. English learning strategy is the efforts belong to students to understand and adopt of information which is introduced in teaching and learning process or in individuals' preparation (Kafadar and Tay, 2014: 259). In another words English learning strategy is the total of activities which done by the learners to understand English in cognitive and affective process. Learning strategy which learners as individuals with needs and right, who can develop and exercise responsibility for their learning is known as independence language learning (Hurd and Lewis, 2008:3).

The EFL learners with TOA tend to be independence learning. They are eager to do some probabilities to get the learning objective. The notion of independence is an autonomy and control in learning experiences have come to play and increasingly important role in language learning. This strategy focuses on the needs and diffusion of decision making of individual learners rather than the teacher's or institution's interest. Independence is in the sense of learning

context, outlining philosophy of learning, and learner attributes. Independence language learning refers to a context means the learners use their ability to understand target language which is facilitated by the context or language learning setting rather than mediating presence by the teacher. Independence learning refers to philosophy of learning is aim to develop and foster independence in learners. The last dimension of independence language learning is at learner attributes which needed to take action dealing with their own learning. It is the learners' awareness of their own needs and interests. It is fostered by creating the opportunities and experience which encourage learners' choice and self-reliance. This way promotes the development of learning strategy (Hurd and Lewis, 2008:5).

EFL learners create opportunities and experience to achieve good proficiency which is known that they have. It means that the learner who realizes his/her need and right will use TOA to tackle kinds of ambiguity in learning EFL. TOA tackles insufficiency of information regarding a particular stimulus or context. Insufficiency of information is also known as too little, too much, or seemingly contradictory information (Basoz, 2015: 54). This condition means the learners do not present any known clues in learning EFL. Sometime complexity is found. It is great number of cues that must be taken to be account. Then contradictory which is any different cue suggested different structures. In EFL learning the ambiguity must be faced not to be avoided. Faced means here accept not to be rejected. To tackle the ambiguity, the learners should have tolerance. It is supported by MacLain's opinion (1993) in Vahid, Kashani, and Haddadi (2011: 151) who defined the word of tolerance is acceptance whereas intolerance is

rejection”. In line with TOA is an ability to tackle ambiguous of new stimuli. The learner with TOA will feel comfort in learning. It is because they are able to tackle ambiguous new stimuli without annoyance and without requesting for help. It is relevant into TOA which is defined as individual ways deal with ambiguity. It means that the learning most effectively when the learners are given chance of experiences, risks, and interactions (Vahid, Kashani, and Haddadi, 2011: 151).

TOA may be happened in particular area of English skills and aspect of language. When EFL learners access authentic text written in any kinds of knowledge in endless supply and at any time, in the texts they may find some ambiguity cases. In understanding the text, it is needed to identify words meaning, sentence structures, correspondence of each letters and pronunciation. It is because the text is regarded as a ‘chain of isolated words, each of which is to be deciphered individually’ (Hurd and Lewis, 2008: 69). The learners can read the text with their convenience in high-speed, high-tech, and increasingly interdependent world. The learners have to use their TOA to identify words and making meaning from text through being taught of necessary skills and strategies (Westwood, 2001: 4).

TOA help EFL learners in listening skill when they often face difficulty. To get good listening the learners have to think about and direct the listening process themselves. In listening they series of activities, they are planning, monitoring, evaluating and problem-solving. To overcome this problem they need to use their TOA. It is relevance to the function of TOA which facilitate learning. This strategy is important because they oversee, regulate or direct the listening comprehension process by orchestrating the deployment of specific cognitive

strategies. In addition, the listener uses cognitive strategies to get the meaning by summarizing the information from what have heard or manipulate elements from the listening text. In another way the specific techniques is used to get inference as the listening task (Hurd and Lewis, 2008: 85).

TOA is needed in writing skill when the EFL learners tend to have difficulty. It is because writing is solitary activity which is naturally individual practice. More than that, it is a complex cognitive process involving the writer's long-term memory where knowledge of the topic, audience and writing plans are stored. TOA will facilitate this learning by relating prior knowledge and gain new related information in exciting way. In writing independence activities are done in sub kinds of processes such as idea- generation, goal-setting, organizing, reviewing, evaluating and revising. It is task environment, including the rhetorical problem and the text produced (Hurd and Lewis, 2008: 10).

TOA facilitates speaking in independence learning strategy through the use of pragmatics ability. Pragmatic ability is the way of people carries out specific social function in speaking such as apologising, complaining, making request, refusing things, invitations, or complimenting. They are involved in speech acts as the product of pragmatic ability. The speech acts consist of basic meaning as conceived by the speaker, an intended illocutionary meaning, and an actual illocutionary force on the hearer (Hurd and Lewis, 2008: 119).

TOA has essential role in learning English skills where the learners are endless of learning grammar. Independence learning strategy refers to the ability of the learners to take autonomous decision in any learning context to develop their grammar. According to Ellis and Khrashen in Hurd and Lewis (2008: 148)

that foreign language grammar is learning through implicit and explicit learning. Implicit is the strategy of learning grammar by developing unconsciously as a result of interaction with meaningful input. Explicit knowledge is developed consciously in based on declarative knowledge of morphosyntactic rules of foreign language proficiency.

This is line with view that grammatical knowledge took precedence over lexical knowledge, with many applied linguists believing the role of vocabulary was merely to provide context for the learning of structures. More over vocabulary has come to the fore, with the development of lexical syllabuses and the recognition that vocabulary and grammar are inextricably linked. Implicit learning through exposure to authentic texts and interaction in the target language is the key factor in expanding vocabulary. It is also thought that explicit learning in the structured manner of the language lesson, or the independent learner's conscious focus on memorizing word lists (Hurd and Lewis, 2008: 162).

TOA is an aspect of foreign language learning that involves an ability to tackle ambiguous new stimuli without annoyance and without requesting for help. It belongs to learner individual strategy. TOA has been the range of means developed to raise learners' awareness and knowledge of themselves, their learning needs and preferences, their beliefs and motivation and the strategies they use to develop target language competence. It can be seen through previous relevance research. In EFL learning, most of learners have difficulty. This case is also happened in Iranian learners. It is a research done by Mona Ezzati in 2016 with the title "Exploring Tolerance of Ambiguity and Grammar Achievement of Advanced EFL Learners". In his research the result was found that there is

significant relationship between overall grammar knowledge of Iranian EFL learners and TA (tolerance ambiguity). It is based on the function of TOA which help EFL learning in grammar. It is because TOA has a strong influence in EFL learning process. The EFL learners TOA can handle the EFL learner problem in learning grammar.

TOA has the impact into English proficiency. It is proved by the result of research which is done by Yi-An Hou in 2019 with the title “The Impact of Multiple Intelligences on Tolerance of Ambiguity and English Proficiency-A Case Study of Taiwanese EFL College Students”. TOA could help the participants be familiar with their multiple intelligences and be aware of the existence of uncertainty in EFL learning situation. Participants may make the best use of their intelligence strengths, use more language learning strategies, become more tolerant of ambiguity, interpret unclear information more properly and become less anxious in EFL learning.

Another case of research related into TOA is in learners’ task oral speech. It is conducted by Farid Khoshahn Hosseini and Zohreh Seifoori in 2018. The title of their research is “The Relationship between Iranian EFL Learners’ Ambiguity Tolerance and the Accuracy of Their Task-based Oral Speech”. In their research, they proposed that ambiguity tolerance (same with TOA in this research) is individual difference which is exerted on the process and the product of learning, and thereby, on various aspects of the learner’s inter-language system such as accuracy of oral speech. The result of their research indicated that TOA has significant moderate relationship into learners’ task-based oral speech. The more tolerant of ambiguity the participants were the more accurate descriptions they

could produce. The research finding also supported a significant moderate and positive relationship between participants' AT and the accuracy of their task-based speech. It is to say that high level of AT were found to be positively associated with high levels of accuracy whereas less tolerant were found to produce more inaccurate speech.

Relevance into the essential of TOA in EFL learning, dimension of this research attempts to find out TOA in English proficiency of EFL learners at English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen. It is based on English proficiency of the learners at of the FKIP tends to be low when it is compared into other department at this faculty. The data were observed based on the TOEFL score document which is use as the requirement for graduation in this faculty. This condition is seen when the researcher teach TOEFL subjects at this faculty. They tend to have minimum scores of the objective learning material. During teaching the material, the researcher observed that the cause of the obstacle is the new things they faced. The new thing means they are faced in to new vocabulary, new set of rules of sentence structure, new culture in any kind of text. This condition still at a glance is observed while teaching. It is needed to be observed deeply to gain information to see the causes of the problem. It will be gained through this research. This research will gain the information of TOA and the EFL learners' proficiency. Further this research will investigate the ways and reasons of the realization of TOA in tackling English ambiguity with the title "Tolerance of Ambiguity in English Proficiency of EFL Learners at English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen"

1.2 Problem of the Research

TOA is essential for the EFL learners. It will help them to improve English well. TOA is the strategy to overcome kinds of ambiguous situation in EFL. The ambiguous situation is based on novelty, complexity, and insolubility situations. It is also refers to the EFL characteristic which often perceived as a set of rules and formula that must be followed rigidly in which no fun and varieties are allowed. This condition makes language learning full of uncertainties where a good language learner must have a good tolerance towards ambiguity to overcome it. For some learners, ambiguity makes foreign learning exciting whereas for others it makes them frustrating in foreign language learning. For them ambiguity is exciting are they who have TOA in comprehending novel lexical item or even situations.

These conditions of EFL become as the research background in which towards a set of question which formulates as the research problems. This way is done with the purpose to guidance research works systematically until to get research result and conclusion at the end. This research will be conducted systematically based on these questions as guidance. They are as following:

1. What are the levels of TOA of EFL learners of English Department at FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen?
2. Does TOA significantly correlate with English Proficiency of EFL Learners at English Department at FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen?
3. How do the EFL learners tolerate the ambiguity in English Proficiency of English Department at FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen?

4. Why do the EFL learners tolerate the ambiguity in English Proficiency of English Department at FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen?

1.3 Objective of the Research

The research will be categorized success when it gains its objective. The objective is one of future if research that must be gained based on some steps. The objective of this research will be gain based on the research problem which stated in previous point. There are three objectives will be gained in this research. The objectives are as follows:

1. To ascertain the levels of TOA of EFL learners of English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen
2. To explore the significant correlation between TOA and English proficiency of EFL learners of English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen.
3. To explain the ways to tolerance ambiguity in English proficiency by EFL learners at English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen.
4. To discover the nature of way with ambiguities when learning EFL by the learners of English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen.

1.4 Scope of the Research

English is foreign language learnt in Indonesia. It is studied at any level of education from kindergarten up to university level. As a foreign language, English

is one of compulsory subjects which have to be passed by the learners at graduation of any level of education. It means that English proficiency is essential to be concerned. It is because English proficiency is one of the carrier of succeeding in academic area and in career of working. One of English test of proficiency in Indonesia is TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) which is used to fulfil the requirement. English proficiency is involving of receptive skill (listening and reading) and productive skill (speaking and writing).

As the foreign language, English has phonetic, grammatical, and lexical types which different into first language belonged to Indonesian learners. It is assumed that in learning aspect of English (word, phrase, or clause) learners face different perspectives of ambiguity as English is often perceived as a set of rules and formula that must be followed rigidly in which no fun and varieties are followed. It means that the learners should be having high TOA in order to improve English proficiency.

It is relevance to the statement stated previously in research background that learners of high TOA are indicated optimistic, innovative. They tend to interpret an ambiguous situation as a threat or a source of discomfort (Grenier, Barette & Ladouceur, 2005). TOA is concerned in to English learning strategy as the efforts which belong to students to understand and adopt of information. It is introduced in teaching and learning process or in individuals' preparation (Kafadar and Tay, 2014: 259). In another words English learning strategy is the total of activities which done by the learners to understand English in cognitive and affective process.

Referring to this statement, the researcher will conduct a research to TOA of EFL learners. In this occasion, will not astray by the limitation on level of TOA, Correlation of TOA and English proficiency, influence of TOA, the nature of coping ambiguity, and the reason the accordance of TOA for EFL learners. This is in line with, TOA has been the range of means developed to raise learners' awareness and knowledge of themselves, their learning needs and preferences, their beliefs and motivation and the strategies they use to develop target language competence.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The findings of this research are expected to be useful based on theoretically and practically significance. Theoretically, this research provides levels of TOA, its relation with EFL skills and aspects. It is based on the essential role of tolerance of ambiguity in improving EFL. The learners of who have high TOA were indicated optimistic, innovative. They tend to interpret an ambiguous situation as a threat or a source of discomfort. Theoretically TOA is the learners' ability to function rationally and calmly in a situation in which interpretation of all stimuli is not clear. It has strong positive correlation with the successful second or foreign language learning.

Practically the result of this research is expected to give contribution as the reference of doing research related to TOA and learning strategies. It is especially for learning English and language generally. Furthermore practically the result of this research is expected to be useful as the strategy of EFL teaching for English

teachers and lecturers. In another side the students will understand that TOA is essential way to improve of EFL.

1.6 Key Terms of the Research

This section is concerning with certain terms that are employed in this research. In this case, it is considerably necessary do define operationally some terms related to the title “Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA) in EFL Learners: English Department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen”. It is done to persuade the readers to have the same perceptions and interpretations to this research. In another words it intends to avoid misunderstanding and to clarify some concepts used in this research. In this point the researcher tries to give operational definition of some terms. They are as follows:

- a. TOA is the way of learners in mastering of language. It is a person’s ability to function rationally and calmly in a situation in which interpretation of all stimuli is not clear. Otherwise individuals who have low of tolerance will get simple way in learning English. Technically they will take black and white way or jump into the conclusion without taking any time to consider all of the essential elements of unclear situation. It means that low of tolerance ambiguity will impede English learning. Referring to this explanation that tolerance of ambiguity can be understood as English learning strategy. Simply definition of tolerance of ambiguity in this research the EFL learners’ learning strategy to ignore, accept or be comfortable to face the situation of learning based on the ambiguity outlined by Norton (1975). The definition of

ambiguity is the situation with the condition of (1) multiple meanings, (2) vagueness, incompleteness, or fragmentation, (3) a probability, (4) unstructured, (5) lack of information, (6) uncertainty, (7) inconsistencies and contradictions, and (8) unclear.

- b. English as Foreign Language (EFL) is one of language which has the role as international language. It is English which learnt as a foreign language in any level of education in Indonesia. It is one of compulsory subject in Indonesian of educations.
- c. EFL learners are the learners at English department of FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen.
- d. Learning Strategies is the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning. The various operations are the specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation of learning.

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