Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter presents the explanation and description of this study. It proceeds in several stages. They are background of the study, statement of the problem and limitation, research questions, purposes of the study, and significances of the study.

Background of the Study

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is an English proficiency test designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need study or work where English is the language of communication. IELTS is one of the most widely used academic language tests by receiving academic institutions in Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand (Phakiti, 2016). IELTS is available in two test formats: academic and general training. There are four parts: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The difference between IELTS academic and IELTS general training is in the subject matter of the reading and writing sections. In this study, the researcher only discusses about IELTS in academic context. The test takers will take the listening, reading and writing tests all on the same day one after the other, with no breaks in between. It is depending on test center, speaking test may be on the same day as the other three tests, or up to seven days before or after that. In the listening test, test takers will listen to four recorded texts, monologues and conversations by a range of native speakers, and write the answers to a series of questions. These include questions that test takers ability to understand main ideas and detailed factual information, ability to

understand the opinions and attitudes of speaker. In reading passage, the Reading component consists of 40 questions. A variety of question types is used in order to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument and recognizing writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose (Douglas, 2000). Then, in the writing component of IELTS academic includes two tasks. Topics are of general interest to, and suitable for test takers entering undergraduate and postgraduate studies or seeking. The last is speaking. Speaking component assesses test takers use of spoken English, and takes between 11 and 14 minutes to complete.

The idea of conducting this study came when the researcher joined an International Language Testing course. That course held pretest and post-test of IELTS. Based on the researcher's observation, many students felt anxious and found problems when they attempted the listening section of the IELTS. Multitasking ability was one of some problems faced by the researcher and the students. Many questions in listening require multitasking ability such as completing note and sentence, table completion, and map question. Example, in answering labeling map question, the students should listen to the speakers, reading information in the map and also writing the answer or information in the same time. The other problem faced by researcher was easily forget what speaker said when spoken text was too long. The problem also supported by Goh (2002, she said that listening presents additional difficulties to the test taker because it is held within limited capacity on brain working memory. It means that test takers will forget quickly what is heard from speakers. Aside from limitations with their

capacity of working memory, test takers also need to deal with comprehension of meaning-bearing words, phrases, clauses, and sentences connected discourse on spoken language (Golchi, 2012). In this respect, because listening skills are challenging for the students in general and cause difficulties, developing effective listening strategies may help them to answer question in listening section of IELTS. It can also better prepare students for real life communication with other speakers. Based on the researcher's experience and observation, every student had different strategies to deal with their difficulties although their teacher taught them with same instructions and strategies. It might happen because every student has different habit in their autonomous learning. Students tend to choose their own strategies that fit them to solve problems they faced. Looking at that phenomenon, the researcher believes that every student has their own ways to answer various question type when they attempted IELTS listening section.

As what have been mentioned and facts above, the researcher is fascinated to find out the students' problem in IELTS listening section. Then, the researcher also wants to research their own strategies to answer question types in listening section of IELTS.

Statement of the Problems and Limitation

There were several problems faced by students when they attempted IELTS in International Language Testing course. Based on the researcher experience, she found some problems in IELTS. To start with, it was too long text in the reading passage. The researcher could not understand all of information written in the text. Besides, the researcher also found problem in writing task 2.

In writing task 2, there was statement given. The researcher should give her opinion or idea and the reason for the answer and include any relevant examples from her knowledge and experienced. The problem was that the researcher could not organize the idea to be good sequences. Further, the most challenging section in IELTS was listening. This happen was not only for the researcher, but it was felt by the students as well. Most the students looked desperate when they attempted IELTS listening section. After finishing accomplished IELTS, many students talked to the researcher that they confused with speaker accent. They did not familiar with British accent. In addition, they also said that speakers in recording speak too fast. It will be the dreadful if the test takers did not understand what the speaker said. They cannot answer the question because some sections in listening is completing question or filling the blank.

The focus on this research is on listening. a key skill in language use, but much harder to test and research than speaking and writing because most of the processes involved in listening happen within the minds of language users (Goh, 2002). The researcher focuses on exploring problems in listening section which were faced by students in EED UMY batch 2012 when they experienced IELTS in International Language Testing course. Furthermore, she also focuses on investigating students' strategies to answer six types of question in listening section of IELTS test.

Research Questions

Based on background and statement of the problems above, there are two research questions that the researcher wants to investigate in this study. They are:

1. What are the problems faced by students in attempting the listening section of the IELTS test?

2. What are strategies used by students at English Education Department of UMY academic year 2012 when they attempt the listening section of the IELTS Test?

Purpose of the Study

Related to research questions above, this study has two objectives that have to be accomplished. They are:

1. To reveal the difficulties faced by students in attempting the listening section of the IELTS test.

2. To investigate listening strategies used by students at English Education Department of UMY academic year 2012 when they attempt the listening section of the IELTS Test.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to have significant effects for some subject such as:

The researcher. The research finding hopefully will give a good impact for the researcher in two aspects. First, she will improve listening skill especially in the listening section of IELTS test by understanding challenge and question types of IELTS. Second, the researcher who is going to be an English lecturer in

the future will be able to help her future students with a better understanding on their challenges based on the results of this research. Hence, the researcher will concern how to use strategy properly.

Students. The students will know and become aware on their difficulties in listening section of IELTS. Therefore, they can identify and apply the effective strategies to answer questions in listening section of IELTS test. On the other hand, by applying the effective strategies, it will develop their listening skill, so that they can make them get a higher score on listening section of the IELTS.

English teachers. The result of this study will give advantages for English teachers in which they will get a better insight on the listening section of the IELTS learner's difficulties in that section and IELTS listening strategies. These insights will naturally place teachers in a better position to guide their learners overcoming some of their listening difficulties. It is also expected that the findings about students' listening difficulties in IELTS test can provide English teachers some guidelines for material evaluation and selection.

The institution. The result of this study can be used as evaluation for the institution. Hence, the English Education Department of UMY can support their students to improve their listening ability especially in IELTS. In addition, the institution will provide resources and facilities based on what they need to support them in applying their strategies.

Other researchers. This is the first study to highlight the challenges that students face in the listening section of IELTS at EED UMY. This study can draw attention to this important issue and promote an open discussion about strategies

to tackle the issue. Hopefully other researchers can build upon these results to conduct research with different skills in IELTS test like reading, writing and speaking.

Outline of the Study

The outline of this study is organized as follows: chapter one discuss background, statement of the problem and limitation, research question, purpose, and significant of the study. Chapter two reviews some academic literature of the research. Chapter three highlights the research methods which involve of design, setting, participant, data collection method, technique of data collection, and analysis of data in the study. Chapter four presents finding and discussion of the study. Furthermore, in this chapter focus on answering two research questions which are possessed by the researcher in this study. Chapter five provides the conclusion and the recommendation of the study.