CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I of this research presents such topic as: background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of the key term. Each section is presented as follows.

1.1 Background of the Study

Academic anxiety during education is the most important kind of anxiety in teen years. It threatens students' psychological health and affects their efficiency, aptitude, personality formation, and social identity (McDonald, 2001). Academic anxiety is a general expression which refers to a social phobia or social anxiety in which the person falters in their function and cannot confront situations assessing themselves such as examinations (Khosravi and Bigdely, 2008). This anxiety is functional, and different studies show that 10%-30% of students are involved (Lashkari, et. al., 2007). In fact, academic anxiety is a self-obsession which is characterized by feelings of self-inferiority, regarding their abilities and students often tend toward negative cognitive assessment, lack of concentration, undesirable physiological reactions such as increasing of heart rate, cold fingers, drop in blood pressure and lower educational performance (Keogh, et. al., 2006).

This anxiety is related to students’ competition with their classmates and reduction in standards of educational performance, assignments, examinations and high rigidity, ability to study and worry about the future (Alison and Helen, 2009). It seems that in our country fear of low marks, and associated blame from families,
classmates and friends ridicule, fear of inability to continue education, especially to entry university, bothers high school student’s psychologically (Yen-Ru, et. al., 2008). In this regard, there are different methods of therapy for decreasing anxiety and increasing educational and professional performance. One of these methods is behavioral therapy such as assertiveness training (Nota, 2003). This method was used in 1991 by Salter (Mehrabi, et. al., 2009).

Assertiveness training is a structural intervention which is used for social relationship improvement, anxiety disorder therapy, and phobias in children, teenagers and adults (McCartan and Hargie, 2004). This training is a multi-content method which includes guidance, role playing, feedback, modeling, practice, and the review of trained behaviors (Worley, 1997). Assertiveness or disclosure is one of the most important and fundamental social skills which are part of behavioral and interpersonal skills. It seems that low assertiveness and high anxiety in students simultaneously creates educational dysfunction, cessation of learning, ability weakness and decreases in aptitude. It does not only endanger student’s psychological health but also deprive them of a healthy life (Mahmoodi, et. al., 2003).

Up to now, different research has studied the effect of assertiveness on educational anxiety but with different results. The research of Mahmoodi (2004), Mehrabi (2009), and Kipper (1992) show the positive effect of assertiveness training on decreasing of educational anxiety. However, the research of Rosenberg (1997) and Stephens (1997) shows that assertiveness training has no effect on anxiety.

Based on the reseacher’s observation on English Department Students of University of Muhammadiyah Malang, the classroom condition is sometime active
and sometime passive on some courses. Students usually actively asked, suggested, and kept their opinion, yet it was only on the number of courses that require them to discuss or present the paper. In other subjects, students appeared inactive to ask any questions or to express their opinion. Students merely wanted the learn finish quickly done and could go home soon. It showed that the students was less of assertiveness, particularly for students who studied in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher is really interested in conducting research about assertiveness at students of English Department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is: how is the level of assertiveness at English Department students’ in University of Muhammadiyah Malang?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on research question above, the purpose of this study is to find out how the level of assertiveness at English Department students’ in University of Muhammadiyah Malang is.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is important because it can give detail information about the level of assertiveness of English Department Students. This research means to explore the level of assertiveness of English Department Students. This research is important for the students to know their level of assertiveness. For English Department, this
research expectedly can contribute additional knowledge about students’ assertiveness. For the next researcher, this research can be used as reference for his similar research.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The researcher wants to focus the scope of the study on the level of assertiveness of English Department students in University of Muhammadiyah Malang. Besides, this research is limited to English Department students who take Structure III subject in University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

1.6 Definition of the Key Term

In order to avoid misinterpretation, the definition of key term is given as follows:

1.6.1 Level : An assertiveness scale of English Department students (adapted from Oxford Dictionaries)

1.6.2 Assertiveness : An English Department students’ ability to formulate and communicate their own thoughts, opinion, and wishes in clear direct and non-aggressive way (adapted from Znidarsic, 2010)

1.6.3 Level of Assertiveness: Scale of English Department Students’ ability to tell about their needs or ideas clearly and directly to their classmate and their lecturer (adapted from Michel and Fursland, 2008)