CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

The preliminary study revealed that poetry seems seldom to be touched in EFL teaching particularly teaching young learners. The learners get involved in English songs, games, role plays, and functional texts but are rarely introduced to poetry. Having read the syllabus of English subject in elementary school, it did not include poetry as one of the learning materials. Moreover, a phone interview with an English teacher of a state elementary school in Serang City revealed that poetry was never given to the students. Her first reason was that she never thought to make use of poetry in her teaching. The second reason was that the elementary school syllabus offered a lot of activities but there was no sufficient time allocation. The last issue made it almost impossible to try an alternative and innovation in the English teaching including using poetry as a resource.

Poetry as a resource to learn language seems rarely to be considered. The EFL teachers do not present children poetry and do not explore it together with the young learners in the classroom. For example, an English teacher of a private elementary school in Bandung City which placed English as the special content revealed a fact that poetry was not used as a learning material. She often gave poetry to the EFL young learners since she used a textbook from Cambridge which includes poetry in the beginning of each unit. However, the teacher said that she just utilized poetry as a reading material for the classes she was teaching (the first, second, and third graders). The two existing conditions above supported the argument that poetry seems as the most neglected component in language curriculum (Denman, 1988; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999; Wyne & Jones, 2001; Sloan, 2003).

Several views have been expressed about the reasons of why poetry is still seen distant to EFL contexts particularly to Indonesian contexts. The first reason is that several English teachers do not think that poetry is a relevant material to teach the target language (Wyne & Jones, 2001; Munjin, 2008; Ngesti, 2011; Iida, 2013). They do not see poetry as the learning material that can facilitate students' communicative competence. The arguments come up probably because of the absence of instructional models regarding the use of poetry in language classroom (Lockward, 1994; Štulajterová, 2010). Most teachers do not have an idea on how to make use of poetry in EFL teaching because they never have an English teacher who taught poetry effectively. As the result, most English teachers acknowledged a discomfort with teaching poetry. Unfortunately, the teachers' perspective toward poetry as a language resource caused them to give their students little exposure to poetry, which later gives an impact on the growth of children's negative attitude toward poetry. Kennedy (1994) observes that students' dislike for poetry often stems from incompetent teachers and queer associations to things that are worlds apart and of course the string of mind boggling questions that follow the poem. In other words, students dislike poetry because of their own bad experience with this literary text.

The second reason why poetry is not used in the teaching process as accentuated by Brindley (1980) is the elliptical, metaphorical and highly allusive languages of poetry. The teachers may feel that the difficulty of the task employing poetry would demotivate students (Iida, 2013). From this perspective, poetry has little room to be offered to the EFL classroom, especially to EFL young learners. Besides the issue of relevance and linguistic vagueness, learners might have difficulties in understanding poetry due to the cultural assumptions which influence the use of literature, including poetry, within the teaching process (Riverol, 1991; Turker, 1991; Finch, 2003; Zelenkova, 2004). Thus, many EFL teachers refuse to use poetry to teach English to young learners.

The third reason is that the teachers assume that EFL young learners' language proficiency has not yet reached the level to understand the poetic concepts. However, actually children have been familiar with poetry and poetic concepts even though they could not define or describe it for they learn it by experiences. Poetry is primarily an oral form of literature that draws heavily on the auditory perceptions of the listeners. Poetry is often put as a song lyric which daily surrounds the young learners even started from their early age. Although people are not aware with the existence of poetry, children were observed to invest some poetic concepts like rhyme and rhythm and using them at playtime (Wyse & Jones, 2001; Sloan, 2003). Therefore, any reasons beyond neglecting poetry in EFL curriculum for young learners should be put away.

Neglecting poetry could be meant unawareness to its power. As an authentic material, poetry can facilitate language acquisition effectively. Using children poetry in a language class also promotes a number of positive learning functions related to the four language skills (Hedge, 2000; Smart, 2005; Utami, 2012) and language areas such as pronunciation (Collins, 2008) and English structure (Holmes & Moulton, 2001; Kurniasih, 2011; Utami, 2012). In addition, poetry can also be used to facilitate language learning by reducing anxiety and increasing motivation (Nasr, 2001; Duzzy, 2002; Munjin, 2008; Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010; Štulajterová, 2010; Ngesti, 2011). In other words, poetry can improve three factors of learners: language ability, attitude, and motivation.

Regarding the communicative approach applied in the nowadays language teaching, studying literature including poetry in the EFL classroom is in line with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles (Van, 2009) in relation to the use of authentic materials, appreciation of different cultures, contextual and meaningful learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richard & Rogers, 2001). Although the curriculum of English teaching in elementary school was decided as an extra-curricular based on the 2013 curriculum, the implementation is adapted to the

need of each school. The government has admittedly determined that the objective of English teaching is to provide a good basis for communicative competence (Musthafa, 2001; Kurniasih, 2011). Communication is still the main purpose of EFL teaching. Poetry, fortunately, can be a medium for the EFL young learners to communicate both in oral and written form. Thus, utilizing poetry to teach EFL young learners seems suitable to achieve the goal.

Another advantageous effect is that poetry learning can connect intellectual, emotional, and physical experiences (Gadjusek, 1988). It means that learning through poetry fulfill holistic principle in which three learners' aspects could be covered within the classroom activities. Even with poetry, teachers can teach science, history, geography, personal, social and moral education, art, music and, if pushed, mathematics (Sedgwick, 2000). It shows that the learning is really holistic as mandated in the new national curriculum 2013.

Primary level education should emphasize on the character development of the young learners; the mandate is even reinforced in the 2013 curriculum. Similarly, language education needs to parallel this goal (Suherdi, 2012). Poetry evidently provides it. As one of three literature genres, poetry includes wisdom, ideology, culture, and moral values (Musthafa, 2008). These elements show a great importance to activate and to enhance the reader's emotional intelligence (EQ), and this makes literature particularly suited to the language classroom where the constituents of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, all contribute to more effective language learning (Ladousse-Porter, 2001).

Bearing all this in mind, it seems that the obstacles above can be solved by choosing suitable poetry for young learners (Turker, 1991; Vasuthavan & Kunaratman, 2009; Yeasmin, Azad & Ferdoush, 2011; Çetinavcı & Tütüniş, 2012; Khatib & Mellati, 2012). Fortunately, poetry for children is available, so does the one that is written by kids. The language is well-suited to young learners.

So, EFL young learners should not feel worried about how to understand poetry. Furthermore, the benefit can be doubled as the material explores their world from children point of view. EFL young learners need such an authentic and meaningful text in order to increase their motivation in learning English.

However, it needs to be mentioned that although the selection of texts is of utmost significance, the way the text is approached by both teachers and learners and the nature of tasks and activities that the learners engage will determine the success of using poetry in the language classroom (Durant, 1995; Vasuthavan & Kunaratman, 2009; Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010; Yeasmin, Azad & Ferdoush, 2011; Iida, 2013). The use of literary texts with effective approach can make learners more conscious, reflective and creative and thereby accelerate the language learning process (Yeasmin, Azad & Ferdoush, 2011). Therefore, appropriate poems as learning material and instructions cannot be separated as a powerful combination. Moreover, as this study concerns on the language and literature teaching, a language-based approach seems suitable with the expected goal that will be achieved. The approach seems possible to be applied in a class in which young learners become its member.

Hence, reflecting on the previous studies on teaching language by using poetry, teacher's ingenuity in arranging EFL teaching by making use of the children poetry seems the heart of the issue. Any detailed phenomena then must be precious to be explored and understood. They will lead to the model development of language and literature teaching to young learners – a study that is still rarely conducted in Indonesian context. Thus, the focus of this study is the process of teaching English to EFL young learners in which they are given poetry written for children through language-based approach. Moreover, the study is also directed to investigate the young learners' responses toward their learning. Understanding the teaching-learning process and the children's responses, at the end, will contribute to the selection of teaching materials and the development of

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appropriate methods of teaching English to EFL young learners through children poetry.

1.2 Research Questions

In an attempt to understand the process of teaching English to EFL young learners through poetry written for children this study was intended to answer the following problems:

1. What happen when children poetry is taught to teach English to EFL young learners?
2. How do the young learners react to their learning?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

As regard with the research questions above, the following are some reasons why this study was conducted:

1. To explore the process of teaching English to EFL young learners through children poetry, and
2. To investigate the EFL young learners' responses toward their English learning through children poetry.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to advance pedagogical theory of language and literature teaching to EFL young learners. It also provides an insight on how and why to teach English through poetry to them. Therefore, the result of the study is hopefully expected to give benefits to the stakeholders and practitioners.

For teachers, this study provides a detailed description of instruction of teaching English to EFL young learners through children poetry. Since it also covers a deep understanding on the learning process in the classroom and students' responses, this study hopefully can be a consideration for decision

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makers to include literature specifically poetry in teaching English to young learners (TEYL) program. For other researchers, the results of the study can stimulate those who intend to carry on research in the same field with certain interest.

1.5   Scope of the Study

This research restricts itself on the phenomena occurred during the process of teaching English to EFL young learners through children poetry. Through this study, a model of teaching English to EFL young learners by using children poetry as the language resource were developed. Therefore, the study provides the description of teacher role, material selection, and classroom activities in which the EFL young learners are engaged. Since poetry teaching closely relates to communicative approach, the instructional interaction among teacher, students and text were also scrutinized. And for the sake of young learners, their responses were investigated.

1.6   Key Terms Definition

Five key terms must be clarified to avoid misconception and misunderstanding of the concepts underlying this study. The following definitions would be helpful in this regard:

1. EFL Young learners refer to children of primary education aged 5 to 14 years who learn English in non-English environment (Pinter, 2006).
2. Poetry is the expression of ideas and feelings through a rhythmical composition of imaginative and beautiful words selected for their sonorous effects (Lynch-brown & Tomlinson, 1999:41). And in this study, children

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poetry is defined as poetry that has been specifically written with young readers in mind with language that is not too complex for them to take in, and also poetry shared with the adult canon which editors have selected for children or which children have found, liked, borrowed, and hoarded for themselves (Styles, 1998).

3. According to Carter and Long (1991), language-based approach is defined as a literature teaching approach which seeks to integrate language and literature study. This approach was developed based on the idea that literature provides authentic context of the language and rich linguistic features. Carter and Long further explain that this model includes some strategies that have been familiar to teachers of English as a foreign language such as jigsaw reading, matching, gap-filling, reading aloud, paraphrase, and creative writing. These strategies are intended to help students find ways into a literary text.

4. Interaction means conveying and receiving authentic messages that contain information of interest to speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both (Rivers, 1987:4). However, interaction can happen everywhere, at home, at school, etc. Thus, a specific definition of interaction related to this study is required. Kumpulainen and Wray (2002:16) mention school-based interaction which is intentionally oriented towards learning. It seems that school-based interaction is similar with classroom or instructional interaction. Therefore, instructional interaction can be defined as the act of sharing of messages that leads to achieve the intended learning objectives.

5. Children's response in this study means both verbal comments and non-verbal behaviors (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1989) which become the sign of the EFL young learner's response toward the instructions and the children poetry.

1.7   Organization of the Paper

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides a general description of the research. This introductory chapter consists of background, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, key terms definition, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II deals with literature review concerning several theories underpinning the study. First, it delineates the underlining theories namely constructivism, interactionism, and communicative approach. Second, it discusses the definition of children poetry, the types, the importance in EYL program, and poetic devices. Third, it explains the models of teaching literature in EFL classroom particularly language-based approach including the principles and the instructional considerations. The last, it also covers the explanation of three-way instructional interactions in poetry class and children's responses to children poetry.

Chapter III elaborates research method of the present study. It presents the preliminary study and the findings. It also explains and justifies the research design and the research site and participants. Furthermore, it describes the techniques of data collection namely non-participant observations, video recording, document collection, and in-depth interviews and how the data is analyzed.

Chapter IV presents and analyzes the research findings. The phenomena found are discussed in order to develop an understanding of the process of teaching English to EFL young learners through children poetry.

Chapter V elaborates conclusions and recommendations. It concludes the discussion of research findings in the previous chapter. It also suggests the decision makers and EYL teachers for further action and mentions several potential topics for further research.

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