CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the significance of the study, the definitions of the key terms, and the organization of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

Writing plays a significant role in the process of language learning. Writing is the provision for continuing study in college or university settings (Lee, 2008), especially for senior high school students. By the time students enter the college or universities, they will have been exposed to writing because numerous kinds of learning activities require them to write. Based on 2013 National Curriculum of Indonesia, moreover, writing is one of the language skills that should be taught to students aiming to enable them to write different types of texts.

In spite of the importance of writing, some students still lack of academic writing ability which has become a national issue in Indonesia (Meilani, 2013, p. 379). This might happen because writing is "a complex process" (Wong, Chen, Chai, Chin & Gao, 2011, p. 1208) requiring students to struggle with a variety of writing issues, including delivering the content, using the language, using the mechanics, organizing the report, and choosing the appropriate vocabulary (Ferris, 2003).

With regard to the complexity of writing, errors are also unavoidable (Katayama, 2007; Hamouda, 2011; Kavaliauskiene & Anusiene, 2012) since students "are still in the process of acquiring the L2 lexicon and morphological and syntactic systems" (Ferris, 2011, p. 9). Meanwhile, valuable writing cannot be accomplished in one draft (Friedlander, 1990, p. 110; Kim & Kim, 2005, p. 3; Hyland, 2009, p. 21).

Thus, students "need distinct and additional intervention" from teachers to bridge these gaps and develop strategies for finding, correcting, and avoiding errors in the writing issues mentioned above (Ferris, 2011, p. 9). As stated by

Vygotsky in Okamura (2004, p. 69), students will be able to achieve their maximum potential by the help of more knowledgeable people.

In this regard, one way to help students produce meaningful pieces of writing is providing supportive written feedback from teachers (Gascoigne, 2004, p. 71). The role of written feedback in the development of writing skills has been viewed as a central part indicating the quality of language learning and teaching process (Coffin, et al., 2003, p. 102; Hyland, 2003, p. 177; Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 83; Carless, 2006, p. 219; Emilia, 2012, p. 63).

Written feedback, to be discussed in detail in Chapter II, is beneficial to take place for two main reasons. First, it is critical to assess students' writing process (Aridah, 2003, p. 106; Coffin, et al., 2003, p. 102; Hyland, 2003, p. 177; Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 83; Carless, 2006, p. 219; Emilia, 2012, p. 63) including its strengths, weaknesses, and to give suggestions as an attempt to develop their writing skills (Coffin et al., 2003, p. 104; Carless, 2006, p. 220 & Mahfoodh, 2011, p. 7). Second, it is also crucial to encourage students to be "more autonomous writers" (Kim & Kim, 2005, p. 2).

A number of studies have examined the effectiveness of teachers' written feedback (e.g., Cohen & Calvacanti, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2004 & 2008; Ngai, 2009; Telceker & Akcan, 2010; Hamouda, 2011). However, to the researcher's knowledge, research on written feedback in Indonesian context has been conducted by a few researchers (e.g., Mardijono, 2003; Purnawarman, 2011; Maharsi, n.d; Irawati & Maharani, 2012). None of these studies has been conducted in senior high school level. They were undertaken in either university or junior high school context.

This study, hence, aims to fill this gap by examining a teacher's written feedback on students' writing at one senior high school in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Specifically, this study attempts to identify the teacher's focus and strategies in giving the written feedback on students' writing. Moreover, this

study aims to identify the students' preferences for the focus and strategies of the teacher's written feedback.

The results of this study are expected to be significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the results will contribute to the enrichment of the literature on the written feedback. Practically, the results will give insights into the practice of teaching writing, especially in EFL context, related to kinds of written feedback focus and strategies contributing to the development of students' writing skills.

1.3   Research Questions

This study attempts to address the following questions:

a. What is the focus of the teacher's written feedback?

b. What are the strategies employed by the teacher in giving the written feedback?

c. What are the students' preferences for the focus of the teacher's written feedback?

d. What are the students' preferences for the strategies of the teacher's written feedback?

1.4   Purposes of the Study

Departing from the background of the study above, this study aims to figure out:

a. The teacher's focus when giving the written feedback

b. The strategies employed by the teacher in giving the written feedback

c. The students' preferences for the focus of the teacher's written feedback

d. The students' preferences for the strategies of the teacher's written feedback

1.5   Significance of the Study

The results of this study are considered to be significant theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it is expected that the research findings will greatly develop as well as enrich the theory of written feedback. Meanwhile, practically, the results will be significant for both the teacher and the students.

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For the teacher, the results of this study will be significant in two aspects. First, the results will gain the teacher's understanding of the students' expectations on what types of feedback which are suitable to be given and how to deliver them. Therefore, the teacher can adapt appropriate methods of giving written feedback that cater the students' expectations which lead to long term benefits. Second, the results will give insights for the practice of teaching writing, especially in EFL context, related to kinds of written feedback focus and strategies contributing to the development of the students' writing skills. For the students, the results will contribute to the development of their writing ability since they will avoid the same mistakes in the future writing based on the written feedback given by the teacher.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Form-focused feedback in this study is a type of feedback which concerns with the surface-level of writing, encompassing grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

2. Content-focused feedback in this study is a type of feedback which is related to the global meaning of the writing, including content and organization of ideas (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994).

3. Direct feedback in this study is the direct correction of the students' linguistic errors allowing them to only copy the correction into the final draft (Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

4. Indirect feedback in this study deals with indicating the students' errors by underlining, circling, coding, or giving other marks without giving the correct form of the errors (Ferris, 2006).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter I has provided the introduction which highlights the basic description of the study. The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II deals with the theoretical framework building up theories and

references for this study. Chapter III describes the methodology employed to conduct the study. Chapter IV elaborates the research findings and discussion. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the findings, describes the limitations, and offers some recommendations for both the classroom practice and the further studies.

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