

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general issues related to the present study. These include the background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, scope of the study and organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

Decades ago, teachers perceived students as helpless individuals who gradually become equipped to enter adult world (Konning, 2004). Some research showed that this practice is commonly adapted in most developing countries such as Indonesia (Nugroho, 2008), Malaysia (Tan & Samyudia, 2009), and Thailand (Phungpol, 2005). The power culture, which is still embraced in most of developing countries, is believed to be the culprit of this teacher-centered method. Students are expected to be teacher-dependent, obedient and submissive in class. The existence of digital era where Internet becomes a need in our daily basis and the blooming of social media have brought changes. This cyber community has also affected most people on how they learn things. By the growing number of social media users, particularly young people under 35, these people are now becoming critical and autonomous learners.

The significance of critical thinking in education, particularly higher education, is now acknowledged by a great numbers of educators (Schafersman, 1991; Ennis, 1962, as cited in Simpson, 2002; Emilia, 2010) who argued that education must involve critical thinking. Critical thinking can be seen from one's language outputs; speaking and writing. Fundamentally, Indonesian students can be taught critical thinking although it takes a long time for them to learn critical thinking (Emilia, 2010). She also added that Indonesian students are relatively critical but not courteously critical. Regarding this, it is essential to teach critical thinking skill to Indonesian students as early as possible.

Although many previous studies have investigated critical thinking on students (Schafersman, 1991; Ennis, 1962, as cited in Simpson, 2002; Emilia, 2010), only some studies explored critical thinking through discussion (Tsui, 2002), critical thinking in writing by applying genre-based approach in Indonesia (Emilia, 2005) and the use ICT in generating students' critical thinking (Sharma & Haigh, 2008). Also, concerning genre-based approach, there have only some research which investigated the effects of using genre-based approach to teaching writing in EFL context (Sabouri et al, 2014) and designing a genre-based lesson plan through website and e-mail in Indonesia (Widodo, 2006).

It has been widely known that next to its wide usage for social interaction among young people, social media is also increasingly used to support learning activities. However, there has not been a research on the use of social media in teaching argumentative writing and critical thinking in a genre-based learning program in Indonesia. In practice, higher education institutions are still relying on traditional learning management systems that do not fully capitalize on the potential of social media for enabling participation in global learning networks, collaboration and social networking (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2011). Pedro (2005) argued that technology helps to increase educational benefits. Moreover, his research showed that students are allowed to learn more and more effectively.

In response to the educational issue as explained above, a research which accommodates such issue is urgently needed to be conducted. Thus, there is also a need to examine how social media can help students in learning argumentative writing and critical thinking in genre-based approach. Some research has shown that some students find it difficult to practice critical thinking elements such as arguments, reasons, and evidence in their essays (see also Moore & Parker, 1995; Stapleton, 2001; Reichenbach, 2001, among others) which directly show their ability to create a good and thoughtful argumentative writing (Chaffee, 2000). It has been proven by Reichenbach, (2001); Emilia (2005); Flores, (2006); and Alagozlu (2007) through their studies, argumentative writing is an effective means to portray students' critical thinking. The last purpose of this study is to

find out the students' perception on social media as a tool to help them promote critical thinking skill in argumentative writing.

1.2 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How can social media be used in genre-based approach and affect students' argumentative writing and critical thinking?
2. How do the students perceive social media as a tool for learning critical thinking skill in argumentative writing?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

As mentioned in the background above, the study aims to:

- to address the use and the effects of the use of social media on developing students' critical thinking as reflected in their argumentative writings.
- to understand students' perception of the use social media as a tool for learning critical thinking skill in argumentative writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the results of the study will help to contribute theoretical, practical and pedagogical significances to Indonesian education as in the following ways:

- Theoretically, this study aims to enrich the literature about the use of social media in genre-based approach and its effects in developing students' argumentative and critical thinking. The result of this study can be used to support the previous theory and research that have been conducted before.
- Practically, this study can provide information and suggests that social media can be used as the tool to promote students' critical thinking as seen in their argumentative writing.

1.5 Clarification of Terms

For the purpose of clarification, the important terms used in this study have been defined. The following terms are:

1. **Social Media.** This refers particularly to Twitter, a micro-blogging system that was created to gain short attention and generate quick change mentality of today's world and let others know what someone is thinking, yet limit the thoughts only up to 140 characters. The microburst information is often referred as Tweets (Bunzel, 2010).
2. **Genre-Based Approach (GBA).** This refers to the writing approach which offers students explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts and helps them to consider the forces outside the individual that help guide purposes, establish relationships and ultimately shapes writings (Hyland, 2003).
3. **Argumentative Writing.** This refers to a type of writing which includes arguments, facts, evidences, reasons, description or explanation, use of reference to make the writer's position seem indisputable. It is used to persuade and convince others that something is urgent to do (Chaffee, 2000; Feez & Joyce, 1998).
4. **Critical Thinking (CT).** This refers to the mental process of thinking as a means to and end and an evaluation for an action to do. Context is important in the CT process (D'Angelo, 1971; Moore & Parker, 1995; Reichenbach, 2001; Paul, 2002; McPeck, 1992).

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is a case study of undergraduate English for Economics students in one university in Bandung, Indonesia. This study uses document analysis on pre-test and post-test to reveal the development of students' critical thinking in their argumentative writing by using social media specifically Twitter, classroom observation and also depth interview to find out the students' perception on the use of social media as a tool for learning critical thinking skill in argumentative writing conducted in the genre-based approach. The document analysed were texts

which were written by three students from the Faculty of Economics in their first semester in university. As a result, six argumentative essays from three students were analyzed in terms of elements of critical thinking using Systemic Functional Grammar which includes arguments, reasons, facts, opinion and conclusions (Paul, 1991) to see their writing and critical thinking improvement.

1.7 Research Report Organization

The organization of the study will be presented in five chapters.

1. Chapter one is introduction. It consists of background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and research report organization.
2. Chapter two discusses some theories of critical thinking, argumentative writing, genre-based approach and systemic functional language. This chapter also displays some previous studies about the topic.
3. Chapter three deals with research methodology such as research design, the subjects, data collections and data analysis, and ethical considerations.
4. Chapter four explains findings and discussions from the document analysis, observation including the teaching program, and interview.
5. Chapter five provides conclusions, suggestions, and recommendation derived from the study.