

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses background, the purpose of research, research questions, significance of the research, definitions of the terminologies and organisation of the dissertation.

#### **1.1. Background**

Feedback in writing supervision has become a serious attention among researchers recently as it plays an important role in the process of learning. There have been a number of studies showing the importance of feedback in writing supervision such as indicated by Austin (1991), Black and William (1998), Castle et al. (2008); Coffin et al. (2003); Connell (1985); Hattie & Timperley (2007); Hyland (2009); and Laske & Zuber-Skerritt (1996). Effective and high quality writing feedback is an important element of quality teaching (Austin, 1991; Black & William, 1998). The provision of feedback that is informative, constructive and realistic is a crucial part of any learning experience (Castle et al., 2008), a central pedagogic practice in higher education (Coffin et al., 2003) and is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback on writing plays a central role in the enculturation of students into disciplinary literacy and epistemologies (Hyland, 2009, p. 132). Supervision feedback is a very important process of fostering and enhancing learning, research and communication at the highest level (Laske & Zuber-Skerritt, 1996) and the most advanced level of teaching in the educational system (Connell, 1985).

Other studies have also indicated the importance of feedback as it “lies at the heart of the learning experience ... and through it the supervisor communicates and provides advanced academic training, particularly in writing, to the

supervisee” (Kumar & Stracke, 2007, p. 462). For example, Kleuver (1997), based on his analysis of dissertation students and those who had graduated reported lack of constructive feedback as a hindrance. In this case, students need more constructive feedback. Heath (2002) in his study on students’ views of supervision found out that students looked for supervisory guidance on topic definition, research design and data analysis, and literature to be reviewed. Zhao et al. (2007), in their study on how advisor choice and advisor behaviour affect student’s satisfaction strengthened the importance of feedback. The most satisfied students with their supervisors were the ones who received both (a) regular and constructive feedback on research and (b) regular and constructive feedback on progress towards the degree as well as direct assessment of progress.

Constructive feedback is information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations which include both positive and negative or criticism feedback (Brounstein, 2012). The quality and appropriateness of constructive and detailed feedback on written work has been identified as a key characteristic of good research supervision (Engebretson et al., 2008). Connors & Lunsford (1993) in their study on teachers’ rhetorical comments on student papers reported that praise and criticism in written feedback were influenced by teacher response style. However, too much criticism damaged students’ motivation and self-confidence as writers.

There has also been some dissatisfaction in writing supervision. The dissatisfaction has become one of the reasons of the growing number of research studies focusing on writing supervision (Armstrong, 2004). It was reported that there was dissatisfaction with the interaction and relationships that students experienced in the supervision process (Morrison et al., 2007). In their study on feedback, Rowe and Wood (2006) and Nicol (2008) find out that feedback continues to be a common source of students’ dissatisfaction and students are dissatisfied with the feedback comments. These comments are important to be explored as they influence on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley,

2007) especially to help students gain the successful completion and the quality of thesis.

A number of research studies on feedback have been conducted recently. Researchers who investigated feedback focusing on written and oral forms include Elawar & Corno (1985); Buswell & Mathews (2004); Alamis (2010); Saito (1994); and Chenoweth & Luppescu (1993). Next, written feedback related to the effects such as attitudes were examined by Elawar & Corno (1985); Radecki & Swales (1988); Simpson (2006), to opinions and perceptions by Grami (2005); Sivyer (2005) and Mustafa (2012), to expectations, reactions and responses by Buswell & Mathews (2004) and Alamis (2010). Then, feedback connected to sociolinguistic competences and to system of language development were explored by Corder (1967); Inoue and Kubota (1989) and Grami (2005). Further, feedback in terms of modes such as positive and negative (criticism) comments were investigated by Radecki & Swales (1988); Sivyer (2005); Simpson (2006) and Patchan et al. (2009). In addition, feedback related to sources such as peers and tutors or instructors were examined by Kurt & Atay (2007); Patchan et al. (2009); Mills & Mathews (2009); Lai (2011) and Hyland & Hyland (2001). Finally, feedback related to the types such as tutorial, formative, workshop, seminar, and conference for doctoral thesis proposal (Lai, 2011), doctoral research supervision (Wang & Li, 2011), thesis student (Bitchener et al., 2011) undergraduate dissertation tutorial process (Mills & Mathews, 2009); and process of writing by first year university students was examined by Kasanga (2006).

All the above studies examined feedback focusing on the forms, modes, sources, and types that were connected to thesis, thesis proposal, dissertation, writing class, sociolinguistic competences and system of language development. The feedback that was provided by tutors, instructors, and peers through tutorial, workshop, seminar, and conference focused on students' perceptions, preferences, attitudes, reactions, responds and expectations in language teaching. Most of those

studies did not focus on the contribution of feedback to thesis development. This research intends to fill in the gap in writing supervision especially the nature of feedback provided by supervisors for the development of students' thesis writing in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources, and the contribution of the feedback to the development of students' thesis.

### **1.2. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the nature of feedback in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources. The other purpose is to investigate the contribution of feedback to the development of student's thesis writing in writing supervision.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- a. What is the nature of feedback in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources in thesis writing supervision?
- b. How does the feedback contribute to the development of the students' thesis writing?

### **1.4. Significance of the study**

Theoretically, this study will provide a reference on thesis supervision feedback especially for undergraduate students. This study of thesis supervision feedback will also provide insights which become important inputs for future researchers having different specific interest to further research in the similar area. It is expected that this study will challenge the existing theories especially on the nature of feedback in writing supervision in terms of feedback providers and receivers, strategies, contents and sources.

Professionally, the results of the study are expected to be beneficial for supervisors (lecturers), students, and the institution. Hyland (2009) suggests that

an important objective of feedback is to help students “understand the expectations of their disciplinary community. It ‘conveys implicit messages’ about the values and beliefs of the discourse community, the nature of disciplinary knowledge and student identities in the community” (Hyland, 2009, p. 132 in Bitchener 2011).

For supervisors, the results will help them understand better problems faced by students so that the supervisors are able to provide more meaningful feedback to their students in order to produce high quality of thesis.

For students, the results will provide information to understand how to respond supervisors’ feedback so that the students are able to produce high quality of thesis expected by the supervisors and institution.

For the institution, the results will provide information to understand how the supervisors (lecturers) provide feedback and how the students try to meet the standard of thesis required by the institution. The results will also recommend the institution to consider how to guide the supervisors and students by providing best practice guide book to supervise and to write thesis.

Practically, this study will help supervisors and students find the best practice in thesis writing supervision in order to produce high quality thesis.

### **1.5. Definitions of the terms**

Some specific terminologies in this study are provided with definitions. The definitions are to explain exactly the meanings of the particular words that need clarifications such as:

*Writing supervision*: a process of research writing communication to foster and enhance learning in order to meet student’s expectation to achieve the goal to produce and complete a qualified thesis. In this research, the writing supervision is the academic activity that involves two parties (three best students with their six supervisors of a Tourism School of Higher Education in Bandung).

*Feedback*: any information in the forms of written or oral, by modes of positive comment, criticism or suggestion to achieve high quality thesis. The feedback is collected on the base of the textual evidence, interview and observation.

*The nature of feedback*: certain practices that are followed to ensure that some aspects of written feedback are standardised by providing assessment criteria. The institution practices are identified from the data collected.

*Effective feedback*: a constructive communication to an individual or group regarding how their behaviour and performance have been affected others (Brutus & Manoogian, 1997).

*Feedback strategy*: the designed plans for providing substantive information (and often personalized) responses to learners in their work performance (Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis, 2010). The strategy includes timing, amount, modes and audience.

*Feedback contents*: the feedback provided by the six supervisors in terms of focus, comparison, function, valence, clarity, specificity and tone (Brookhart, 2008). The feedback is collected on the base of the textual evidence, interview and observation.

## **1.6. Organisation of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides general description of the introduction to the topic of the research. The introduction is to give background information that includes the importance, problems and gap of the study, to explain specifically what the study will attempt to investigate and to state the goals of the study.

Chapter Two discusses theories that support the study. The theories are to review and synthesize previous studies that include writing supervision, writing feedback and thesis assessment.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology that includes research design, site, participants, data collection method and analysis. Its aim is to give the work plan of the research by which researcher goes about the work of describing, explaining and interpreting phenomena.

Chapter Four shows the findings and analysis. The data are shown and analysed to answer the research questions. Chapter Five explains the conclusion and recommendation including the limitation of the research and suggestions for further studies.