

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the introduction of this research which includes background of the research, research problems, purposes of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Research

In this globalization era, the development of information technology has led to a fast exchange of vast amounts of information. As formal education simply cannot keep up with the continuous changes, learners need to be able to take responsibility of their own learning and process some of that information on their own (Kohonen, 1992). In other words, learners need to be autonomy in their learning to keep up with the continuous change of information, including in learning English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, autonomous learners who are characterized with the ability to take responsibility of and to control their own learning are determined as efficient learners. As stated Benson (2011), autonomous learners are regarded as efficient learners since they are able to take responsibility for their own learning which implies the existence of intrinsic motivation, learning awareness, and metacognitive skills (the capability to know how to learn efficiently) as characteristics of efficient learning.

In addition, Benson (2011) adds that since autonomous learning is featured by critical evaluation and reflection on information, autonomous learners also imply active and critical participants in the community, which in turn, can help to develop the community. In other words, since

autonomous learners take the responsibility of their own learning, they will have critical thinking about what knowledge that they need for their life and give good impact for the society. From the elaboration above, it can be concluded that learner autonomy has great implication in individual, education, and society.

Learner autonomy is defined as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981: 3). To take charge of one’s own learning means to have and take the responsibility for all decisions in all aspects of learning such as determining the objectives, contents, methods and techniques, monitoring the progress, and evaluating what they learned (Holec, 1981). In addition, Little (1991: 3) adds that learner autonomy is “essentially a matter of learner’s psychological relation to the process and content of learning”, which includes attention or awareness, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge (Benson, 2011). For those definitions, Holec and Little agree that the learning content should be determined by the learners themselves. Therefore, it can be summed up that learner autonomy is a multidimensional capacity to control over different aspects of learning including learning management, cognitive process, and learning content (Benson, 1997).

One of the important issues in encouraging learner autonomy is the change of roles and relationships between the teacher and learners in the language classroom. Since learner autonomy is a student-centered learning (Lewis & Vialleton, 2011), the learners take an active role in their own learning and do not depend upon teachers (Jacobs & Shan, 2015). In other words, the teacher only facilitates and guides the learners to control their own the learning (Voller, 1997; Palmer, 1998).

A great deal research related to learner autonomy in the language learning was conducted by many researchers such as Mineishi (2010), Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012), and Ceylan (2015). Mineishi’s (2010) research was focused on the perception of adult EFL learners in Japan on the

learner autonomy. Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) investigated English language teacher's belief and practices on learner autonomy. Ceylan's (2015) experimental study was aimed at finding out whether or not learner training in language learning strategies at Kocaeli University in 2013-2014 fosters the learner autonomy.

However, research which focuses on the multi-dimensions of learner autonomy in practice and relates them with the lecturer's perception about learner autonomy especially in an undergraduate program in Indonesian context has not been studied widely. The limited research which concerns with the multi-dimensions of learner autonomy makes the investigation less holistic since the nature of learner autonomy itself consists of multi-dimensions (Ikonen, 2013). Furthermore, relating the multi-dimensions of learner autonomy in practice with the lecturer's perception about learner autonomy can enrich the findings' description of the research with the underlying perception of lecturer toward the issue. Considering the elaboration above, this research is intended (1) to explore the dimensions and degree of learner autonomy which are found in EFL learning in a state university in Bandung, particularly in English education program; (2) to figure out the situations under which learners learn autonomously; and (3) to investigate how the lecturers' perception about learner autonomy influences their efforts to encourage learner autonomy.

The results of this research are expected to enrich the literature on dimensions of learner autonomy in EFL learning context and to encourage the teachers to create a supporting environment that enables the learners to raise their autonomy in the formal education context.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the explanation above, this research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is learner autonomy found in EFL learning in a state university in Bandung, particularly in English education program in terms of:
 - a. the dimensions of learner autonomy?
 - b. the degree of each dimension of learner autonomy?
2. Under what situations do the learners learn autonomously?
3. How does the lecturers' perception about learner autonomy influence their efforts to encourage learner autonomy?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

In line with the background and the research questions, the purposes of this research are:

1. To find out what learner autonomy is found in EFL learning in a state university in Bandung, particularly in English education program in terms of:
 - a. the dimensions of learner autonomy
 - b. the degree of each dimension of learner autonomy
2. To figure out the situations under which learners learn autonomously
3. To investigate how the lecturers' perception about learner autonomy influences their efforts to encourage learner autonomy

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research is limited to investigate the dimensions and degree of learner autonomy in EFL learning in a state university in Bandung, particularly in English education program, under what situations the learners learn autonomously, and how the lecturers' perception about learner autonomy influences their efforts to encourage learner autonomy.

The EFL learning context is limited to four classes, namely writing, reading, speaking, and listening for general communication which are attended by fifty two first-year undergraduate students majoring English Education in a state university in Bandung.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research is expected to give theoretical and professional contributions. Theoretically, this research can be the empirical information for English teachers and researchers about the dimensions of learner autonomy in EFL learning in higher education context, particularly in Indonesian context. Professionally, the findings of this research are expected to encourage the teachers or lecturers to create a supporting environment to promote learner autonomy and to provide several examples of lecturers' efforts to promote learner autonomy in higher education context.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

1.6.1 Autonomy

Autonomy is “a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals and even for the same individual in different context or at different times” (Benson, 2001: 47).

1.6.2 Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy refers to a multidimensional capacity to control over different aspects including learning management, cognitive process, and learning content in which degree of the capacity are various for different learners (Benson, 1997).

1.6.2.1 Technical Dimension of Learner Autonomy

Technical dimension of autonomy is defined as “the learners’ act of learning a language on their own outside the classroom, without the aid of a teacher and, also, as the situation in which learners, for some reason, are obliged to take control of their own learning” (Benson, 1997: 19)

1.6.2.2 Psychological Dimension of Learner Autonomy

Psychological dimension of autonomy focuses on the capacity of individual learners which “allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning” (Benson, 1997: 19)

1.6.2.3 Socio-cultural Dimension of Learner Autonomy

Socio-cultural dimension of autonomy is closely related to the concept of ‘interdependence’ which refers to the situation where learners are responsible for their own learning with or without the help of others and are expected to cooperate with others (Little, 1991).

1.6.2.4 Political Dimension of Learner Autonomy

Political dimension of autonomy concerned with two levels of autonomy: group autonomy (the autonomy of the groups to which the individuals belongs) and individual autonomy (the autonomy of the individuals within the hierarchical relation to the groups to which they belong) and freedom given to learners to control their own learning with or without the presence of self-mastery (Berlin, 1969; Benson, 2011).

1.6.2.5 Degree of Learner Autonomy

Degree of learner autonomy in this research is defined as the level of learners’ capacity to control over their own learning related to self-management of learning, cognitive process, and the content of learning in which it can be categorized into low, nearly, and highly autonomous learners (Benson, 2001).

1.6.3 Autonomous Learning

Autonomous learning is a student-centered approach to foreign language learning that develops learners’ ability to take charge of their learning, involving their responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning (Holec, 1981; Lewis & Vialleton, 2011).

1.6.4 English as a Foreign Language Learning

EFL learning is defined as the learning of English language where the learners do not use English as a means of first language communication (Gebhard, 2006).

1.6.5 Perception

Perception refers to the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information about a person, an object or a situation to form a meaningful experience of the world by involving top-down and bottom-up sensory input processes (Lindsay & Norman, 1977; Bernstein, 2010).

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This research paper is divided into five chapters as follows:

1.7.1 CHAPTER I

This chapter contains a brief overview on background of the research, research problems, purposes of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.7.2 CHAPTER II

The second chapter discusses theoretical foundation about learner autonomy, learner autonomy in the classroom, and theories of promoting learner autonomy.

1.7.3 CHAPTER III

This chapter elaborates the methodology of the research that includes research design, site and participants, data collection techniques, data collection procedures, establishing rapport, establishing reliability and validity, and data analysis.

1.7.4 CHAPTER IV

This chapter presents the findings of the research in the form of findings and discussion.

1.7.5 CHAPTER V

This chapter consists of the conclusion of the research and suggestions for the next research as well as for the lecturers based on the findings found by the researcher.