CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, and the statement of the problem. It also portrays the purpose of the study. Moreover, it includes the significance of the study and the definition of the key terms used in this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In Indonesia, like other countries, large class size is an everlasting challenge in the teaching-learning scenario (Dewi, 2007; Salwa, 2014; Sulistiyo, 2015; Sulistyowati, 2012; Yulia, 2013). This is inevitable in the majority of nations (Iipinge, 2013; Treko, 2013; Valerien, 1991). It remains impracticable for most of governments, of developing nations in particular, to curtail class size (Gupta, 2004; Nakabugo et al., 2008; Shamim, 2012; Yelkpieri et al., 2012) due primarily to monetary reasons (Khan & Iqbal, 2012; Nakabugo et al., 2008).

The investigation on class size is not new, such studies span over a hundred years (Finn et al., 2003). On the one hand, the proponents of large classes claim that such classes provide opportunities for educating large numbers of children at low cost (Christopher, 2011; Ehrenberg et al., 2001). In addition, they are resourceful, due to being culturally diverse (Hess, 2001). The large number of learners in the class may provide opportunities for the learners to socialize, with the result they are able to expand their contact list. It is also an abundant source of a variety of experiences. In addition, large classes provide potential for the faculty members for teaching a variety of subjects (Christopher, 2011).

On the other hand, the opponents of large classes claim that they create numerous issues, such as classroom management, assessment and feedback, limited resources, physical discomfort, noise, health and aural challenges, lack of individual

attention, and flimsy active learning (Coleman, 1989; Cromwell, 1998; Cuseo, 2007; Elkington & Lloyd-Staples, n.d.; Gibbs, 2014; Imtiaz, 2014; Khan & Iqbal, 2012; Leahy, 2006; Nakabugo, et al., 2008; Shamim, 1993; Valerien, 1991). Teachers also struggle in memorizing learners' names, the lack of teacher-students affection, limited extra support to learners at risk, and the deficient assessment of learners' preferences and temperaments (Isbell & Cote, 2009; Leahy, 2006). Some other challenges, such as low participation in class activities (Hourigan, 2013), proxy attendance, disappearance after the roll call and the additional monetary burden on the teacher for hiring assistants to balance the workload (Christopher, 2011) are very common in large class teaching.

Therefore, teaching-learning in large classes is a unique challenge for teachers and learners (Khan & Iqbal, 2012; Leahy, 2006; Nakabugo, et al., 2008). The classes are growing bigger and bigger, particularly EFL classes, with increasing enrollment for the reason that English, being an international language (Bolton, 2012; Graddol, 2006; Smith, 1976) is in demand worldwide (Bahanshal, 2013; Meng, 2009; Nevara & Greisamer, 2011; Thaher, 2005).

The issue of large class size is neither new nor diminishing. Research findings have shown that small class size is conducive to engaging learners academically and socially, leading to academic achievement enhancement (see Christopher, 2011; Finn et al., 2003; Hourigan, 2013; Leahy, 2006). Learners' individual attention is more focused as well (Elkington & Lloyd-Staples, n. d.). Conversely, over-crowded classes have adverse effects on learning during the class and in application to the practical life of the learners (Cuseo, 2007) because the students behave just like an audience (Elkington & Lloyd-Staples, n.d.).Therefore, there is a pressing need to provide an encouraging learning atmosphere in large classes. In order to achieve this numerous factors need to be considered. For instance, an active learning environment must be created to handle large class teaching-learning effectively (Bamba, 2012; Carpenter,

2006; Elkington & Lloyd-Staples, n. d.; Gilbert, 1995; Nevara & Greisamer, 2011; Shamim, 2012; Wosick-Correa, 2006).

In this connection numerous studies have been conducted with multiple learning activities and techniques i.e. active learning, problem-based learning, team teaching, group work, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, parents involvement, after hour teaching, assigning daily homework, class duration increment, steady teachers' training, construction of new schools, frequent official school visits, online feedback (see Christopher, 2011; Coleman, 1989; Cromwell, 1998; Elkington & Lloyd-Staples, n.d.; Imtiaz, 2014; Isbell & Cote, 2009; Khan & Iqbal, 2012; Leahy, 2006; Meng, 2009; Nakabugo, et al., 2008; Nevara & Greisamer, 2011; Shamim, 1993; Valerien, 1991).

The researcher has taught English at a high school in Pakistan where classes were large. The teaching methodology was simply teacher-centered, one way instruction (Christopher, 2011) like the majority of lessons in Pakistan (Shamim, 1997). However, teaching in Japan required more interactive strategies to engage the learners fully.

The researcher intends to gather data for this study in Indonesia. He conducted preliminary research in a state junior secondary school in Bandung, Indonesia. It was not unusual for the researcher to come across a crowded class of forty students, similar to the classes of fifty plus pupils in Pakistan at a secondary school, or over forty in Japan. The conditions in Indonesia are identical regarding class size particularly at state run schools.

Classrooms comprised of forty students are perceived by the teachers as a large class (Christopher, 2011; Nevara & Greisamer, 2011). According to the participating teacher, one of the reasons for large classes at her school is that the status of the school has dropped from an international standard to a normal national

standard school by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. This has shifted the pupil number in the class from below thirty to forty, even forty plus.

Preliminary research findings emphasized cooperative learning (CL), as it is a useful technique in terms of students' engagement and teacher's workload. Furthermore, it enhances confidence, teamwork and leadership skills. However, the participants pointed out a few challenges, such as difference of opinion and imposition of one's ideas making it hard to reach a consensus. These findings are in line with Macaro (1997). Joining a favorite group, thus violating the instruction regarding the group members' number, was another issue. Therefore, research on CL is required in context, specifically its true implementation measured by actual practice.

Preliminary research findings also revealed that there was a dire need in Indonesia to move toward a more learner-centered pedagogy instead of the prevailing traditional teacher-centered approach. This is needed in order to better engage the students, leading to an enhanced success rate (Christopher, 2011; CL Manual, 2009; Hourigan, 2013; Turmudi, 2008), and is in line with the one of the requirements of the 2013 curriculum in Indonesia. Curruculum 2013 stresses implementation of learners' "active learning" (Tantra, 2014, p. 1).

The national education ministry of Indonesia is currently transitioning to this new curriculum, which emphasizes dynamic pupil engagement in teaching-learning. Pedagogy is the pivot in classroom learning and must be chosen appropriately in order to engage the learners. The preliminary study was conducted at the junior secondary level. This is the period when a number of learners begin to show a lack of engagement in the learning process (Willms, Friesen & Milton, 2009) as indicated by less participation, more negative behaviors and shirking of work (Turner et al., 2014).

Thus in Curriculum 2013, the teaching pedagogy focuses on effective learner engagement in teaching-learning because the learning is transformed "from '*peserta didik diberitahu*'(students have knowledge because they are taught by a teacher) to '*peserta didik mencaritahu*' (students have curiosity to gain knowledge by themselves)" (Tantra, 2014, p. 2). Curriculum 2013 also emphasizes that the teaching-learning process be learner-centered, "active and cooperative, and contextual in order to produce creative, productive, innovative, and affective" students to serve locally and globally (Sukarno, 2013, p. 460). The textbook for the new curriculum highlights the importance of group work. In each chapter group activities are mentioned explicitly several times. For example, chapter five proposes "working in small groups" at least fifteen times (see Wachidah, Diyantari & Khatimah, 2015).

Theoretically and empirically CL is one approach to engage the pupils in the classroom (Johnson & Johnson, 1989), and it is the appropriate instructional approach for Curriculum 2013 because this curriculum and CL are based on the same theory. In addition, the core elements of CL match traditional Indonesian beliefs (Prastyo, 2014).

CL has been implemented around the globe, although most commonly in the West. It is still a scarcely used pedagogy in classrooms in Indonesia where class size is generally large (Prastyo, 2014). Numerus studies have been conducted in Indonesia in English teaching under the banner of CL. Dewi (2007) conducted a qualitative study at the college level in Yogyakarta. Learning together in English reading was investigated by employing classroom action research design by Lambe (2011) at tertiary level as well. Tamah (2011) investigated student interactions by implementing "jigsaw" at university level. Muamaroh (2013) carried out a combination of action research, quasi-experimental approach at the university level in Surakarta. Al-Munawwarah (2013) conducted a case study at a junior high school in order to observe the effects of STAD on reading skill. A study was conducted by Zainollah (2014) employing think-pair-share strategy in order to see the effects of CL

on speaking ability of Islamic junior high school students in Madura. Prastyo (2014) conducted a quantitative study at elementary school employing the TGT method. Sukatmi & Raidy (2015) conducted an action research study by employing the jigsaw method to investigate learning at elementary schools in Bekasi. Ahsanah (2015) implemented the group investigation method in a high school using a quantitative research design. Astuti (2016) conducted a qualitative study in order to figure out the challenges to form CL community by in-service teachers. Muamaroh (2016) investigated qualitatively the effectiveness of training the existing high school English teachers to implement CL in Surakarta. The majority of the aforementioned studies were conducted in tertiary education with a quantitative research paradigm. There is still limited empirical knowledge in qualitative research at the junior high school level, therefore it is worth researching the implementation of CL in a junior high school context, in order to evaluate the benefits of CL, and the challenges that may be encountered. This study proposes to investigate the implementation of CL in a large EFL junior high school class using a qualitative case study design to fill this gap. Hennessey & Dionigi (2013) contend that CL theories may not be appropriate to the teachers' particular context. In this case, they need to modify CL and negotiate its various contextual facts, such as age and behavior of learners, the class size, the time and facilities, the amount and type of learners' drill, the level of teacher and learners understanding and so on. Further research on the effective implementation of CL from the teacher and learners perspectives is crucial to illuminate the differences between the theory and practice, and improve teacher education.

CL is promoted as a teaching-learning approach to tackle crowded classes and to stimulate students to more interaction through techniques such as group and pair work (Meng, 2009; Raja, 2012). In addition, CL is one of the current teaching-learning approaches that meets the requirement of society to train youth to be "adaptive, flexible, cooperative, and collaborative" (McAlister, 2009, p. 2). CL is based on theories of constructivism of learning originated by Piaget, and the social constructivism of Vygotsky (Vianna & Stetsenko, 2006). These theories propose that

humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences and socializing with others. Learners learn not only from mentors but also from their more proficient fellows (Vygotsky, 1978). The focus of learning collaboratively is to create responsibility in the learners to construct, change, and improve understanding cooperatively (Dooly, 2008). Thus one of the salient traits of CL is that the knowledge is produced and conveyed by the learners. Dooly argues that the learning process takes place when the learner has made the connection between their existing knowledge and their new learning. A number of research findings indicate that learning with peers is effective when a small group of two to five members engage in the activity collaboratively (see Bullard & Bullock, 2004; Dillenbourg, 1999; Felder & Brent, 2007; Gillies, 2003). In CL activities, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator, rather than the knowledge source as is the case in a teacher-centered classroom. Cooperative group activities can be a source of self-motivation which leads the learners to lifelong learning (Raja, 2012). In sum, the failure to shift pedagogy to a learner-centered approach may significantly reduce the learners' chances of coping with the challenges in twenty-first century (Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Considering the background described above, it is significant to engage the entire large and diverse class by employing active learning, so that the learners have more exposure to English as a foreign language while working with peers. English proficiency of students is still generally unsatisfactory in Indonesia, and the students struggle to enhance it. One reason for the struggle could be the use of traditional teacher-centered pedagogy which hinders the learners from having a maximum exposure to English.

As explained above, the new Curriculum 2013 is currently being implemented on a trial basis across Indonesia. The new curriculum emphasizes that the classroom

be learner-centered, engaging and cooperative, to facilitate the flourishing of cognitive and affective development in the students. This is stressed in order to prepare students to serve constructively, locally and globally (Sukarno, 2013).

However, the key issue is whether English teachers are adequately prepared to implement CL in the classrooms. The research indicates that Indonesian English teachers are not proficient enough in content and pedagogical knowledge (see Hadi, 2014). In addition, complex CL structures are likely to hold back teachers from implementing it in their classrooms (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998).

Furthermore, the teacher and the learners may not be comfortable in negotiating their roles while implementing CL (Prastyo, 2014). In the Indonesian context, teacher training and the development of programs on the implementation of CL, as well as further research on teacher and learner beliefs about CL have been recommended (Prastyo, 2014). Therefore, this study will contribute to the CL literature worldwide, but particularly address needs in Indonesia. The study attempts to attain an in-depth understanding of how CL is implemented so that CL can be adapted appropriately and employed comfortably in the Indonesian context. Specifically, this study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. How was cooperative learning understood and implemented by the teacher in a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia?
2. What benefits (if any)were gained by implementing cooperative learning in a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia?
3. What challenges were encountered while implementing cooperative learning in a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In line with the research questions, the present study attempts to:

1. investigate how cooperative learning was understood and implemented in a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia.
2. elaborate the benefits (if any) of implementing cooperative learning in a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia.
3. figure out the challenges that were encountered in the implementation of cooperative learningin a large EFL middle school classroom in Indonesia.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be of significance in the following areas:

Theoretical Significance: The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the field of teaching methodology in EFL. In particular, teaching strategies to enrich the body of CL pedagogy that is still limited in the context of Indonesia.

Practical Significance: Exploring CL research in Indonesia is significant in relation to TEFLIN (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia) due to the strategic role of English in Indonesia. English teachers, in Indonesia have more responsibility than other subject teachers due to the fact that English is undoubtedly an international language (Bolton, 2012; Graddol, 2006). It is widely used by native and non-native speakers in communications for economic and diplomatic issues among people and governments of other countries (Hadi, 2014). Therefore, Indonesian learners must enhance their English proficiency. Active engagement is needed, as mentioned in Curriculum 2013, with teaching pedagogy shifted from passive learning to active learning (Tantra, 2014). Thus the current study will benefit the education system by providing insights to teachers on handling large classes with cooperative, interactive, and collaborative instruction, thus enhancing instructional quality in schools. In addition, the findings are expected to provide guidelines on curriculum development, and the use of learning strategies specifically for teachers who are reluctant to accept the challenges of implementing a non-traditional pedagogy. A practical outcome for learners will be a greater understanding of how to

engage effectively in teaching-learning, one of the objectives of Curriculum 2013 in Indonesia.

1.5 Clarification of Related Terms

The following terms will be used for this study as defined below to avoid misunderstandings.

Large class: Many experts agree that there is no unanimous definition of a large class. A large class perceived in one context may be considered small in other contexts, or at a different level in the same context (Hayes, 1997; Nevara & Michael, 2011). The class is considered large where the teacher and students perceive it to be large, irrespective of the teacher-students ratio (Christopher, 2011; Shamim, 1993; Ur, 1996). Learner number is not the only contribution to defining a large class, but other variables influence the teachers' and students' perceptions of class size as well. These include such things as the physical space in the classroom, the teachers' and students' present and prior experience of class size, and teachers' preferred methodology and teaching style (Christopher, 2011; Shamim, 1993). For the current study, junior secondary English classes exceeding 30 students are considered large (Blatchford et al., 2002; Hayes, 1997; Hess, 2001). The participating teacher fully supported the definition in her interview response "20-25 students per class is an appropriate class size and 30 is the limit beyond which class size is large for me" (Mrs. Nur, November 29, 2015).

Cooperative Learning (CL): "Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning, provided the following conditions are met – positive interdependence , individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills, group processing." (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991, p. 3).

According to Slavin (2014, p. 785), "Cooperative learning refers to teaching methods in which students work together in small groups to help each other learn academic content." The ultimate goal of CL for the learners, is to help each other succeed academically (Slavin, 1995).

CL is a "group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (Olsen & Kagan 1992, p. 8).

Thus CL is a form of active learning in which students are intentionally grouped to work together to learn primarily basic, indisputable facts and develop social skill. A traditional approach to classroom authority is directional or centralized in the instructor who operationally defines and procedurally directs the small group interactions. Group task is divided into independent subtasks where each learner is responsible for a portion of the work (Bruffee, 1992; Cuseo, 2002).

In this study, cooperative learning (CL) refers to the small group pedagogy in which heterogeneous groups of students work together to enhance their own learning and help improve the learning of their group mates.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the background of the study, the research questions, and the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. In particular, the new "Curriculum 2013" produced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education incorporates cooperative learning as an integral component for developing the competencies students need. However, there are questions as to how prepared existing teachers are to implement these new learning strategies. Using teaching English as a specific example, this study will investigate both the existing practice of CL in large classrooms, as well as provide solid research data that will be useful in developing

effective means to maximize the benefits of CL while managing the real challenges involved.

The following chapter will discuss the review of the relevant literature.