

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background of the study, problems, research objectives, the scope, significance of the study, research method and definition of terms. In addition, the organization of the thesis is also presented at the end of the chapter.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Over the years, there has been a growing concern for the promotion of autonomy with regard to the English language competence. Many have voiced that learner autonomy is highly related to successful language learning (see Benson, 2006; Dam, 1995). In contrast, low autonomy among students might cause ineffective language learning since they do not have a strong engagement in their learning and become too demanding on the teacher. As a result, the target of having good English communication competence among students is hard to be achieved. To solve this, the promotion of learner autonomy is needed since it is believed that learner autonomy can improve students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. By promoting learner autonomy, students' awareness of their learning process ownership is being developed as well as their learning responsibility.

In order to promote learner autonomy in the classroom, some changes need to be undertaken by both the teachers and students. Changing shift of the learning focus of the teacher as the main center to the students as the main center is demanded. It means that the teacher can no longer act as a knowledge giver and students as recipients. Indeed, this changing situation requires the teacher to understand the concept of autonomy to be applied in the teaching learning process. However, in reality, implementing the concept of autonomy from teachers' perception might be different following to the current situation. Due to the perception and realization differences, it is crucial to study learner autonomy perspectives from various teachers particularly in the Indonesian context. Thus, this paper is trying to fill in the gap by exploring teachers' understanding of

autonomy by asking their perception toward learner autonomy and how this perception affects teachers' teaching in the classroom.

While it is not known when the term 'learner autonomy' was first used as pedagogy, it appeared officially for the first time in Holec's (1981) seminal paper, in which he defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's learning". His definition of autonomy centers on two key concepts: ability and to take charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981 as cited in Myartawan, Latief and Suharmanto, 2013). According to Holec (1981) ability is "a power or capacity to do something and not a type of conduct, behavior" To take charge of one's own learning, on the other hand is "to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning", which include setting the objectives of learning, determining the contents and progression, selecting the methods of learning, monitoring the learning progress, and evaluating the product of learning. These two abilities are interdependent and equally important to become autonomous.

Coming from learner autonomy definition from Holec (1981), a growing concern of learner autonomy among scholars over the years has provided plenty concept and research on the concept of learner autonomy. A numerous research on learner autonomy also contributes to learner autonomy development today. Leni Dam (2011) works, for example, in her work she proved that autonomy is not exclusive to adult learner, but it also can be implemented to different age learner with different autonomy level. Having a lot of view and perspective on learner autonomy has driven Benson (2001) to differentiates learner autonomy into four different perspectives, namely psychological, technical, socio-cultural, and political-critical (Benson, 1997, 2006; Dang, 2010; Healy, 2007; Oxford, 2003; Sinclair, 2000). The psychological perspective values the personal attributes of the learners; the technical perspective values attribute in the learning environment; the socio-cultural perspective emphasizes the interactions between learners and their environment; and the political-critical perspective focuses on learners' access, control, power and ideology in their community. Each perspective will affect the implementation of learner autonomy. According to Benson (2008), when talking about autonomy from a teacher's perspective, it will

primarily concern with institutional and classroom learning arrangement within the curriculum.

Regarding Indonesian curriculum, recently the government renews the education curriculum. The changing of Indonesian curriculum from KTSP to curriculum 2013 aimed to help students to be more autonomous, which means that the students become the center of the learning. Moreover, Lengkanawati (2014 as cited in Haryono 2014) in her paper asserts that the implementation of Curriculum 2013 provides understanding to the school community and teachers how to treat students to learn independently and provide awareness as a learner to have autonomous learner attitude. However, the promotion of learner autonomy cannot be separated from the teachers since they are the front liner of the curriculum implementation. Sufficient understanding of learner autonomy concept is needed in order to promote learner autonomy in the classroom.

Numbers of positive result toward the research on the implementation of autonomy has put teacher in the main attention as they hold important position in creating an autonomous environment that able to foster learner autonomy. Numerous previous studies on teachers' perspective and how they promote it in the classroom have been conducted outside the Indonesian context. For instance, one of the most cited works in this field is the work of Borg and Busaidi (2012), they explore learner autonomy in relation to language teachers' belief. In their paper, they try to answer six questions one of which is about teachers' perspective toward the meaning of learning autonomy. The result shows that learner autonomy based on teachers' perspective, focus more on psychological orientation, which they key of this perspective sees the learner as an individual. In the Indonesian context, the exploration of learner autonomy, mostly focuses on the effectiveness of autonomy in the learning process while teachers' perception of autonomy is rarely becoming the main focus. Thus, this research aimed to explore this issue from teachers' perspective by asking how the idea of autonomy may appear differently and how this view related to the version of autonomy as mention previously. Moreover, how the implementation of the teachers' perspective comes into practice will also be revealed. This study hopefully can

contribute to the development of learner autonomy literature, particularly in the Indonesian context.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

1. What are the teachers' perceptions toward learner autonomy?
2. How do the teachers promote learner autonomy in their classroom?

## **1.3 Research Objective**

Based on the focus mentioned above, the purposes of this study are:

1. To portray the teachers' perception about Learner Autonomy
2. To explore some strategies used by the teachers to promote learner autonomy in their teaching practice

## **1.4 Scope of the study**

Since learner autonomy is a broad concept, the current research limits its study on teachers' perception on learner autonomy including the definition of learner autonomy, teacher roles, characteristics of learner autonomy, condition to support learner autonomy and some issues regarding the promotion of learner autonomy in Indonesian context. In addition, and how do teachers promote learner autonomy in actual teaching practice will be find out.

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study is important for several reasons. The result of this study hopefully provides new insight to the areas of English language teaching. This study will enrich the existing research in the field of learner autonomy, specifically teachers' perception on learner autonomy and the way they promote it in their actual teaching practice. The findings from this study will establish detail description between learner autonomy perceived by the teacher and knowledge of learner autonomy presented in literature review. Moreover, the analysis of the approach used in the classroom to promote learner autonomy would provide information for professional development.

## **1.6 Definition of terms**

There are some frequently used terms in this study that need to be clarified in order to have a better understanding to the present study. The first is learner autonomy. It is defined as ability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec 1981). In the present study, learner autonomy does not view as learning without teachers, it focuses on students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Sharing similar view with Nguyen (2014), in this study the definition of learner autonomy will follow the working definition of learner autonomy proposed by Nguyen (2014); Learner autonomy is learner's willingness and ability to take responsibility, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate his/her learning with tasks that are constructed in negotiation with and support from the teacher.

The second specific term is teachers' perception on learner autonomy. According to Ruch (1967), perception refers to a process of sensory clues and past experience which are organized and relevant to individuals' situation. In the present study, teachers' perception on learner autonomy refers to teachers' interpretation of learner autonomy based on their past experience which is relevant to the classroom situation.

## **1.7 Thesis Organization**

The organization of the thesis will be in five chapters. Chapter one contains the background of the study, followed by research questions, purpose, and its significance to the research. In addition, the chapter also presents some clarification of the terms and thesis organization.

Chapter two highlights the detailed theories of learning autonomy including teacher roles in autonomy environment.

Chapter three emphasizes on the methodology of the research that elaborates research design, the procedures of the research, research sites, participants, the phases of gathering data collection and some instrument used in the research. Moreover, the way how the data will be analyzed also elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter four deals with the discussion of data analysis obtained in the research site, exploration of questionnaire, interviews and observation and some finding which come up during the process of investigation.

The last chapter, chapter five concludes the overview of the findings consisting of some conclusions, suggestions and recommendations for future research.