

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses about the rational of current study related to background, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of terms of the research, and organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

In general, EFL students in Indonesia have learned English as a foreign language starting from elementary up to university levels. Here, the EFL students learn about the productive (writing and speaking) and receptive (reading and listening) skills. In regards to the writing skill, it is known that writing is one of the productive skills that should be learnt by the EFL students. And regarding the importance of having writing skill itself, it is not only useful for helping the students to continue their study to higher level of education, but also giving them advantage later in finding a job. What's more, having writing skill is also helpful the students in transforming the knowledge into written form in learning, supporting their learning, and enhancing proficiency in reading comprehension, application, and critical thinking.

Moreover, in teaching and learning process, it is important for the teacher to provide feedback for the students in order to help them improving their ability in mastering the target language. Feedback that students receive from a source, or a combination of sources, provides them with information about what is good and what needs to be improved so that they can incorporate and use the feedback in their revisions and in the final product of their writing (Purnawarman, 2011). "It is a chance for the teachers to provide information to students to help them understand their writing progress, weaknesses and strengths that is otherwise rarely possible under big classroom conditions" (Mack, 2009, p. 33). Its importance is acknowledged in process-based classrooms, where it forms a key element of the students' growing control over composing skills, and by genre-

oriented teachers employing scaffolded-learning techniques (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Realizing the importance of feedback, teachers are often try to use it in various ways. Thus, giving various kinds of feedback is expected to allow teachers serve many ways to guide their students to be better. According to Keh (1990), there are three types or options in providing feedback as revision named “peer feedback, conferences as feedback, and teachers’ comments as feedback” (p. 294). By having these kinds of feedback, the EFL students can evaluate their work, revise it, and make such kind of progression toward it. Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen, and Simons (2012) define feedback as “information provided by the teacher concerning the performance or understanding of the student, with reference to a goal and aimed at improving learning” (p. 2).

In the process of teaching and learning, feedback is seen as a helpful tool that the teacher can use in helping the students’ learning. However, due to some circumstances that encounter in the classroom such as limited time, number of materials should be taught, number of students, and other constraints, it makes written feedback become one of the best choices that the teacher can choose in providing the feedback to the students. In Indonesia context, generally there are around thirty up to forty students that stay in one class. Of course, it will make the teacher faces some difficulties in giving feedback directly since there are so many students should be handle in one time. So, that is why written feedback could be one of the alternative solutions to solve this issue. Past studies have shown that both teachers and students value teacher written feedback in the language classroom (Razali & Jupri, 2014; Ferris, 2003; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

For the last decades, there are numerous studies that have been investigated relating to this issue. Many researchers have analyzed the benefits of giving the written feedback to students’ writings. It is proven that written feedback gives positive contributions toward students writing skill. Razali and Jupri (2014) argue that the teacher written feedback encourages students’ revisions in their writing. “Feedback is mostly useful when it provides cues and support to pupils” (Budimlic, 2012, p. 13). Furthermore, it is becoming well understood that feedback is critical to raising achievement. In this light, “the paucity of feedback in the classroom, at least in the sense of feedback that is

received and understood by students, is an important conundrum” (Sutton, Hornsey, & Douglas, 2011, p. 12).

Before conducting this study, a preliminary research was done on December 20, 2016 to find the issue related to the written feedback provided by the teachers. As the teachers were asked about the written feedback implemented in the EFL students’ writing, they explained that, generally, they tended to pay more attention to the grammatical structures in the students’ writing, but sometimes it might change as well. Referring to the results of the preliminary research, the writer came with the conclusion that the teachers didn’t have particular awareness about what kind of focus and strategy that she used in providing the written feedback. According to the teachers’ explanation, the written feedback was given when the teachers thought it is needed to be provided. When they were asked about whether they considered the students’ preferences and perception on how the written feedback was provided to them, the teachers responded that it was never done before, about asking the students’ preferences of written feedback specifically. Thus, the writer wants to investigate more relating to this issue.

According to Williams (2003), when this type of feedback (written feedback) is given, students for the most part simply copy the corrections into their subsequent drafts or final copies. The majority of students does not record nor study the mistakes noted in the feedback. Having students merely copy teacher corrections into rewrites is a passive action that does not teach students how to recognize or correct errors on their own. In some cases, there is possibility that the problems regarding written feedback not only come from the students, but also from the teachers. Fregeau (1999) discovered that the teacher’s method found to be ineffective. Many times the students do not understand why the errors were indicated and simply guess the corrections as they rewrite. Other ineffective aspects of marking of student errors may cause the students to focus more on surface errors than the clarity of their ideas.

Therefore, all of these situations infer that the teacher written feedback is not in line with the students’ preferences and need. The teachers tend to put aside or didn’t take the students’ need as their considerations in providing written

feedback. It is line with a study conducted by Ustunbas and Cimen (2016), as they found that the students had different preferences from the corrective feedback provided by the teacher as they thought it was no use for learning. In addition, Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) also found that there are differences between the students and teachers' preference. These differences could "create some tension as well as challenges in error correction pedagogy" (p.116). And "this mismatch between the concerns of the students and those of the teacher is sure to affect the practical effectiveness of the written feedback" (Wen, 2013, p. 427). If the teacher's feedback and students' need don't meet, it can give such unconstructive effect in students' learning process. However, by considering both the teachers' and students' expectations of how providing the feedback, it is expected that the feedback can be best addressed and used for optimal pedagogy.

Essentially, writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher (Hyland, 2003). Thus, the importance of giving written feedback in writing context is inevitable. But, the thing that needs to be cleared is the effective written feedback is what the students need. It means that the students need something that is understandable and suitable for them. Also, "students are motivated to continue a series of revisions especially through positive feedback" (Wen, 2013, p. 427).

"Students can't hear something that's beyond their comprehension; nor can they hear something if they are not listening or are feeling like it would be useless to listen. Because students' feelings of control and self-efficacy are involved, even well-intentioned feedback can be very destructive." (Brookhart, 2008, p. 2)

"Writing is a complex process, and this complexity poses particular challenges when teachers approach the task of analyzing young students writing samples" (Mackenzie, Scull, & Munsie, 2013, p. 375). Through students' writings, the teacher will have information about how far the EFL students' knowledge of the language by implementing it in the written form. In second language writing context, the effectiveness of feedback becomes even more

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important as it has an impact on the whole process of language learning (Seker & Dincer, 2014). Using this kind of feedback, it can help teacher to evaluate students' writing process in which including its strengths and weaknesses. Through written feedback, the teacher also can put some comments, suggestions, or other relevant information into the students' writings, so they can improve their writing skill. In addition, it can be as a practice for the EFL students in becoming autonomous learners. It means that after they try to revise their own works by looking at the written feedback provided by their teacher. However, the other important consideration in providing the written feedback is that concerning the students' needs and preferences in order to make it more effective and efficient.

Thus, the current study is aimed to analyze the focus of teacher written feedback, as well as the strategy that is used in providing the feedback. In addition, this study also intends to carry out about the EFL students' preferences toward teacher written in terms of focus and strategy in their writings, as well as how the EFL students perceive the teacher written feedback in their writings, by mean that whether it has such a significant contribution to the students' learning process or not.

1.2 Research Questions

As the problems mentioned before, relating the importance of teacher written feedback on the students' writings, the writer has tried to formulate the research questions as follows:

- a. What is the focus of written feedback provided by the teachers on the EFL students' writing?
- b. What are the strategies that the teachers employ in providing the written feedback on the EFL students' writing?
- c. What are the EFL students' preferences toward teacher written feedback in terms of focus and strategy?
- d. How do the students perceive the teacher written feedback in their writings?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

Based on the previous explanation, this study is aimed to find out:

- a. The teachers' focus in providing the written feedback
- b. The teachers' strategies in providing the written feedback
- c. The EFL students' preferences toward teacher written in terms of focus and strategy in their writings.
- d. The EFL students' perception toward the teacher written feedback in their writings.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Based on the previous explanation, it is confirmed that written feedback could give big contribution in students' learning process, especially in writing context. Nevertheless, the teacher also needs to think about the concept of effective written feedback. The important thing that should be underlined in providing the written feedback is it should contain comments and corrections that encourage the learners to become better writer. When the teacher provides the appropriate written feedback, it is not only can help the EFL students improve their writing skills, but also can motivate and train them to be autonomous learners. Thus, this study is expected could give valuable contribution theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it is expected that this study can develop as well as enrich the theory in the area of written feedback on EFL students' writing. Additionally, it is expected that the results of this study can improve the teachers' understanding about the effective written feedback that suitable for the EFL students. Moreover, in term of practical contribution, this study is expected could help and improve the teachers' practice in providing the written feedback, so that the students' learning process can be more precise and effective.

1.5 Scope of the Study

In teaching and learning process, there are so many kinds of feedback that the EFL students can receive. However, this study will only focus on analyzing the written feedback given by the teachers on the EFL students' writing. In this

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sense, this study is conducted to investigate about what is the focus of the teacher written feedback, as well as the strategies used. The written feedback might be in the forms of comments, questions, symbols, signs, error correction, etc, that indicate the incorrect structure in the students' works. Besides, this study also intends to analyze the students' preferences toward the written feedback provided by their teacher in terms of focus and strategy. It aims to explore what kind of written feedback that the EFL students prefer or expect from their teachers. In addition, this study also intends to investigate about how the EFL students perceive the teacher written feedback in their writings, specifically in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavior aspects.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

a. Form-focused feedback

The use of form-focused feedback refers to how the teacher addresses the students' errors in terms of grammar (articles, determiners, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure), vocabulary (correct word usage), and mechanic (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling).

b. Content-focused feedback

The use of content-focused feedback refers to how the teacher provides the feedback related to the content and organizational aspects of the students' writing, i.e. generic structure of the text, cohesive and cohesion of the text, and students' idea/ information in the text.

c. Direct strategy feedback

The term of direct feedback strategy is used when the teacher provides the written feedback by giving the overt correction in the students' writing, i.e. deletion, insertion, substitution, and reformulation.

d. Indirect strategy feedback

The term of indirect feedback strategy is used when the teacher provides the written feedback by indicating the errors using code, symbol, or commentary.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II discusses about the relevant theoretical framework of this study. Chapter III describes the methodology applied in this study, which includes research design, sites and respondents, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, and validity and reliability. Chapter IV portrays the findings and discussions of the study. And Chapter V contains the conclusions and recommendations of the study.