

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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

1.1 Background of the Study

In the traditional view of teaching and learning, a teacher is a person in charge of determining what and how to learn. This way of teaching will create passive learners (Tamer, 2013). Passive learners only absorb the information provided to them by their teacher without any reflections, analysis, and evaluation of the information. This traditional view that teachers as the main resource of the knowledge has gradually changed. The term “learner autonomy” defined as the learners’ authority and responsibility for their own learning has been considered as the key area of research in foreign and second language study. Learners’ involvement in the decision-making process increases students’ motivation and determination in learning. Autonomy and motivation are two elements that interact cyclically in the language learning process (Spratt, Humphreys, & Chan, 2002).

Al-Asmari (2013), Barillaro (2011), Benson (2010) and Borg (2009) claimed that little has been done in the field of teacher perceptions and beliefs on learner autonomy. Borg and AlBusaidi (2012), Palfreyman (2003) and Shahsavari (2014) further claim that there are mismatch between the theoretical discussions of learner autonomy perception and practices of teachers and further go on that although there is a large body of research carried out for learner beliefs on learner autonomy, little has been done so far to investigate what teachers’ beliefs actually are. Without such insight into teachers’ perceptions, the reasons for classroom practices may not be comprehended fully.

Learner autonomy relies on the student-centered method which means that students are involved in the decision-making process based on their language ability. However, learner autonomy does not mean learning without the teacher or letting the students learn alone without a guide. Dam (2003) states that “it is largely the teachers’ responsibility to develop learner autonomy” (p. 135). The teachers should take part in order to foster the development of learner autonomy in the classroom. Autonomous learners are accepted to be capable of putting realistic and reachable learning goals, selecting appropriate methods and techniques to be adopted, monitoring their own learning process, and assessing the progress of their own learning

(Benson, 2001; Dam 1995; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Wenden 1991) with the help of teachers to a certain degree.

Furthermore, Little (2003) explains that learner autonomy relies on teacher autonomy in two senses. First, learners inability to be autonomous and inability to self-reflect and self-learning. It is unreasonable to expect the teachers to develop learner autonomy if the learners do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner. The autonomous learners should understand the learning objectives and goals before making an initiative to attempt their own learning, without denying to share insights during monitoring progress and evaluating their learning process. Second, fostering learner autonomy requires a consistent cooperation between teachers and learners. In this sense, teachers guide the students to achieve realistic goals in formal education context and possessing self-awareness in order to lead the students to a better learning. The learners will reflect on what they learn, analyze their learning methods, decide and reflect their learning whether or not they need improvements or remain stagnant.

Based on the evidence, learners will be more motivated when they realize that they hold the responsibility for their language learning development (Al-Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Jiao, 2005; Little 2007). The extent to which learner autonomy is promoted also influences learners and teachers' views of their roles and relationships.

An understanding of teachers' beliefs should be considered as an integral part of initiatives because it aimed to promote change in what teachers do in the classroom (Wedell, 2009). However, the teachers' understanding of learner autonomy is not well developed (Nguyen, 2014). As argued by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), an analysis of language teachers' understandings of this concepts is lacking. It represents the gap in the literature because teachers instructional behaviors are a powerful influence on students' learning (Mujis, Kyriakides, Van, Creemes, Timperley, & Earl, 2014) and the teachers' beliefs have an essential impact on these behaviors. The way teachers interpret learner autonomy will impact on how much and how teachers promote it. Afterward, it will affect learners' opportunities to become autonomous. In addition, their teaching practices are underpinned by teachers perceptions and their practices resulting from these perceptions further nurture or hinder their thoughts on learner autonomy. Thus, addressing teachers perceptions and practices is particularly crucial. Therefore this study focuses on what learner autonomy means to EFL teachers and what kind of practices teachers implement to develop learner autonomy. The frameworks used in this study are from Borg (2009), Dam (2008) and Thanasoulas (2000).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the reasons above, this study is specifically answer the following questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions toward learner autonomy?
2. What are the strategies that the teachers use to promote learner autonomy?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

As teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy are considered as the important factors that influence the practices in implementing learner autonomy, the objectives are as follows.

1. To explore teachers' perceptions toward the concept of learner autonomy.
2. To explore teachers' strategies in promoting learner autonomy.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the teachers' perceptions on learner autonomy in teaching and learning which are divided into five aspects: the concept of learner autonomy, the characteristics of autonomous learners, the teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy, the constraints and benefits of autonomous learning as well as the strategies to foster learner autonomy implemented by the teachers. The writer investigated two EFL teachers from Senior High Schools in Bandung, West Java.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to be beneficial for both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study can be used as a source of information and literature review of the teachers' perceptions and the strategies in learner autonomy at the secondary level for the further research. This study are expected to fill the information that still limited in the literature regarding teachers' perceptions and practices in implementing learner autonomy. The findings from this study established detail description between learner autonomy perceived by the teacher and knowledge of learner autonomy presented in literature review. Then, since the teacher's perceptions will influence the implementation of learner autonomy, it is hoped to be a reflection and input for the readers and teachers about the teachers' beliefs on learner autonomy and their strategies to foster learner autonomy.

1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms

- EFL

English as a foreign language (EFL) is used for non-native English speakers learning English in the country where English is not commonly spoken. 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). In this research, it is related to teachers who teach English subject in the Senior High School in Indonesia where the status of English is EFL.

- **Teachers' Perception**

According to Skott (2014), different definitions of perception highlight four core elements: it refers to ideas that individuals consider

to be true, it has cognitive and affective dimensions, it is stable and result from substantial social experiences and it influenced the practice. Teachers' perception in this study refers to how the teachers involved in this study perceived learner autonomy based on their past experience which is relevant to the classroom situation.

- **Teachers' Strategies**

Strategies are the procedure, process or rule used in certain field or profession. In this research, strategies refer to the way teachers promote and foster learner autonomy in the classroom.

- **Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy means that the learners' ability to take charge of their learning. This definition is in line with Benson (2001) who states learner autonomy as "the capacity to take control over one's own learning" (p. 47). While for Little (1991) learner autonomy implies as the learners' responsibility with the learning process and content. Learner autonomy in this study refers to the definition of learner autonomy proposed by Little (1991) where learner autonomy emphasizes on learners' responsibility with the learning process and content.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

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 provides clarification of key terms and organization of the paper.

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

Chapter three elaborates the methodology of the research that includes research design, site and participants and the phases of gathering data collection. Moreover, the way how the data will be analyzed also elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the findings of the research in the form of findings and discussion.

The last chapter, chapter five consists of the conclusions of the research, implications and recommendations for future research.