CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Among four skills in the practice of teaching and learning English, which are reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Brown, 2001), writing is acknowledged as the most difficult skill for learners to master (Richards and Renandya, 2002). As Richards and Renandya (2002) further elaborate, the difficulties lie from high level skills, such as planning and organizing ideas, to low level skills, such as spelling, punctuation, word choice, etc. Despite its difficulties, it is important for students to master the skill of writing (Barras, 2005; Harmer, 2004). Harmer (2004) points out the fact that most examinations or tests in academic settings require students to write in order to measure their understanding. In similar fashion, Barras (2005) agrees that both in academic and career settings, people nowadays are often being judged by their ability to express their ideas through their writing.

In Indonesian context, Indonesians are known to have the lack of abilities in writing which is shown by small number of Indonesian intellectuals who publish their own writing (Alwasilah, 2005). Narrowing down to the scope of EFL writing, Indonesian students are known to have difficulties in generating ideas, making a thesis statement, structuring the writing, and discussing their writing (Soehadi, 2007).

According to Warschauer and Healey (1998), technology, specifically computer, has been used for helping language learning, including writing, for more than fifty years. One of the recent ways of involving technology in teaching language, specifically writing, is the use of Facebook as a teaching tool (Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Wu and Hsu, 2011; Al-Smadi, 2013; Shih, 2011; Yunus and Salehi, 2012). Facebook is the most popular social networking sites (SNS) on the web with more than one billion active users (Etherington, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2012; Lee, 2012). SNS is a web service which allows individuals to construct public or semi-public profile within bounded system to create a connection with other users so they can view their list of connections within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Recent research discover that Facebook is beneficial as a teaching tool for language learning because Facebook enables students to study at their own pace and enhance their grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, writing competence, and confidence by enabling them to connect with teacher and their peers (Suthiwartnarueput and Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Wu and Hsu, 2011; Shih, 2011; Yunus and Salehi, 2012). Narrowing down the scope to teaching ESL writing, Yunus *et al.* (2011) reveal that *Facebook Groups*, one feature of Facebook, can help students' writing especially in the planning process before the actual writing is done. Students show that they tend to read their writing first before posting it to the *Facebook Groups* and they also feel comfortable posting their ideas or opinions in *Facebook Groups*. Furthermore, they feel encouraged when their peers 'like' their writing which is posted on *Facebook Groups*.

Given the background of this research explained above, this research is aimed to describe the use of Facebook in teaching EFL writing by describing the use of Facebook, specifically one feature of it named *Facebook Groups*, in teaching EFL writing at university level specifically in Indonesian context. Hence, this research is titled "**The Use of Facebook Groups in Teaching EFL Writing at University Level**".

1.2 Research Questions

This research is conducted to answer the research questions formulated below:

1. How is *Facebook Groups* used in teaching EFL writing at university level?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching EFL writing at university level?

3. What are classroom writing performances used in *Facebook Groups* for teaching EFL writing at university level?

1.3 Purpose of Research

Having the background of the research stated above, this research aims to:

1. Describe the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching EFL writing at university level.

2. Investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching EFL writing at university level.

3. Describe the classroom writing performances used in *Facebook Groups* for teaching EFL writing at university level.

1.4 Scope of the Research

The scope of the research is limited to describe the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching EFL writing at university level. The items analyzed in this research are how *Facebook Groups* is employed in the activity of teaching EFL writing at university level, the advantages and disadvantages of the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching EFL writing at university level, and classroom writing performances used in *Facebook Groups* for teaching EFL writing at university level.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The result of this research is expected to provide a clear picture of how *Facebook Groups* is employed in teaching EFL writing at university level. Description of advantages and disadvantages of its implementation and classroom writing performances used in *Facebook Groups* for teaching EFL writing are also expected. This particular information has significance to:

1. **Teachers or Lecturers**, to give a clear description of how *Facebook Groups* can be used as teaching aid in teaching EFL writing at university level and later can be used as foundation of how to do so.

2. **English Department**, to enrich the literature and existing research toward the use of *Facebook Groups* which can be classified as digital teaching aid.

3. **Future research**, as a foundation of further research toward the utilization of *Facebook Groups* and SNS in general.

4. **General readers** who want to know more about the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing, specifically teaching EFL writing at university level.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

In this research, there are terms that need to be clarified to make sure that both the researcher and the reader of this research are in the same understanding about the terms used. The terms which need to be clarified are:

1. **Social Networking Sites (SNS)**

   According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking site (SNS) is a web service which allows individuals to construct public or semi-public profile within bounded system to create a connection with other users so they can view their list of connections within the system. Myspace, Facebook, Cyworld and Bebo are examples of SNS.

2. **Facebook**

   Facebook, located at http://facebook.com, is a SNS which provides a free service for people to share and connect with their friends through status updates, photo sharing, video sharing, etc. For the time being, Facebook is the most popular SNS on earth with more than one billion active users (Etherington, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2012; Lee, 2012).

3. **Facebook Groups**

Facebook Groups is one of Facebook features which allows users to create a private space so they can share any specific information with specific users who are added to the private space. The closed environment nature of *Facebook Groups* is suitable to be used as class' private group where students are able to share links, announcements, pictures and event to other students (Fontana, 2010).

4. **Students**

Any use of the term *students* in this research specifically refers to the participants of this research. University students are selected as participants of the study considering the implementation of *Facebook Groups* on their class and their familiarity to the use of Facebook on their daily life.

5. **English as Foreign Language (EFL)**

The term *EFL* in this research refers to English as Foreign Language, a term which describes to the role of English which is not widely used in the learners' immediate social context which might be used for future use, or studied as a curricular requirement, but with no immediate practical application (Saville-Troike, 2006).

6. **Writing and teaching writing**

Any use of the term *writing* and *teaching writing* in this research refer to EFL writing and teaching EFL writing instead of referring to writing and teaching writing in general. This limitation is applied since this research is limited to describe the use of *Facebook Groups* in teaching writing in EFL context.

7. **Classroom writing performance**

The use of the term *classroom writing performance* in this research refers to the term coined by Brown (2001) to describe the kind of writing which is performed in the classroom. This term needs to be clarified since the term *performance* is commonly associated to Chomsky's *linguistic performance* (Chomsky, 2006: 102) which means "the actual observed use of language". This clarification emphasizes that the use of the term *classroom writing performance* in this research refers to Brown's term, not Chomsky's term.

1.7 Organization of the Research

This research is presented in five chapters as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter presents the background of research, research questions, aims of the research, scope of research, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of the research.

Chapter II: Theoretical Review

This chapter explains theoretical foundations which are relevant to the topic discussed in this research, such as definition of writing, characteristics of writing, aspects of writing, process of writing, the importance of writing skill, definition of teaching writing, classroom writing performances, the use of web-based technology in classroom, the use of SNS specifically Facebook in teaching, description of *Facebook Groups*, and theories regarding teaching at university level.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

This chapter elaborates the methodology used in this research, including the design of the research, research participant, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter describes the result of data analysis in form of findings and discussion which answer the research questions that have been stated in the chapter I.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions

This chapter presents conclusions drawn from this research and suggestions for further use of the result of this research.