

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the rationales behind the selection of the topic of this study. It contains of the background of the study, questions of the study, purposes of the study, the scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Recent research in the field of EFL education has highlighted the importance of learners' knowledge of genre (Bhatia & Salmani-Nodoushan, 2015; Brown & Salmani-Nodoushan, 2015; John & Salmani-Nodoushan, 2015; Salmani-Nodoushan & Khakbaz, 2011, 2012; Salmani-Nodoushan & Montazeran, 2012) and learners' abilities to form healthy arguments and skills in responding critically to the texts (Alagozlu, 2007; Atai & Nasser, 2010; Aunurrahman, Hamied, & Emilia, 2017; Ferretti, MacArthur, & Dowdy, 2000; Indah & Kusuma, 2015; Indah & Kusuma, 2016; Khoiri & Widiati, 2017; Oktavia, 2014; Vdovina & Gaibisso, 2013). In the context of English teaching in Indonesia, most learning is still oriented towards lessons that are explicitly written and explained by the teachers, in other words; it has not been focused on things that are implicit or things outside the texts (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016; Setyarini, Muslim, Rukmini, Yuliasri, & Mujianto, 2018; Setyarini, 2019ab). As a result, students only learn the meaning, structure, and simple information that can be easily found in the texts. In comprehending spoken and written texts, texts are simply given by teachers but rarely directing students to further process the information in the texts (Shomoossi, 2004; Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Thus, most students are not equipped with reasoning skills; to exploit, analyze, and evaluate arguments contained in texts provided by the books and the teachers and also those they write themselves.

Ample studies have revealed the importance of recognizing arguments for students. One of them is Brookhart's (2010) that emphasizes that students need to

first learn the nature and principles of arguments so that they can make logical and valid arguments. Along with the development of students' skills in analyzing and evaluating the arguments conveyed, she adds that students' academic achievements can be gradually enhanced. In the same way, Mayfield (2014) argues that when students study the rules for making good reasoning and arguments, they will be able to be more careful in making arguments, avoid errors in their reasoning, and evaluate other people's arguments such as those appear in the textbooks and other learning sources. All of this will give students an understanding of how they will define their standpoints and decision-making towards an argument. As one of the principles in the standard of critical thinking contained in the Foundation for Critical Thinking compiled by Paul & Elder in 2008, Mayfield (2014) adds that the validity of reasoning and arguments is important for students to comprehend in order to gain an understanding of norms and rules for clear and effective thinking. Moreover, several other scholars also argue the importance of understanding valid arguments as a basis for training students' critical thinking skills (Alagozlu, 2007; Beyer, 1995; Emilia, 2005; Indah and Kusuma, 2015; Indah, 2016; Khoiri and Widiati, 2014; Oktavia, 2014; Oktavia, Kusni, and Yasin, 2014). The knowledge of understanding argument and argument analysis has been discussed under several other approaches such as the pragma-dialectical approach (see Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992; Eemeren et al., 2002; Eemeren et al, 2009) and the rhetorical approach (see Kock, 2014; Tindale, 2004). However, the concept of argument along with its related components in the study has been shaped by the critical thinking movement thoroughly explained in chapter II.

Accordingly, it can be seen that students' reasoning ability to form healthy arguments is required as one of the critical thinking dispositions. In the context of English language learning, the quality of the students' arguments are mostly and commonly identifiable in their argumentative writing tasks which are parts of informal reasoning (Alagozlu, 2007; Khoiri & Widiati, 2017; Mayfield, 2014; Oktavia, 2014). Unlike scientific reasoning, informal reasoning includes cognitive and affective processes, in which the types of reasoning can be intuitive, emotive, and

rationalistic (Sadler and Zeidler, 2005). It is suggested that that examining the quality of students' reasoning is as important as examining the reasoning patterns that they employ (Sadler and Zeidler, 2005).

The failure to present valid and sound arguments leads to the emergence of logical fallacies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Brookhart, 2010; Khoiri & Widiati, 2017). Seeing that argument is one of the forms of verbal communication that uses reasoning (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1995; Walton, 1990), fallacies are mistaken or bad arguments that take place when a reason does not sufficiently support a claim in lots of ways so that the logical validity of those arguments is undermined (Brookhart, 2010; Evans, 2002; Kemerling, 2002; Mayfield, 2014; Walton, 1990). They can emerge both directly related to the person making the arguments or intentionally-made fallacies and those that appear unnoticed (Brookhart, 2010; Dowden, 2010; Driver, Gast, and Lowman-Thomas, 2016; Mayfield, 2014). However, it is argued that none of these patterns have an immediate contribution to the type of fallacy made by the students. In other words, there is no specific pattern that results in the emergence of a fallacy of a particular type.

Some scholars have identified university students' fallacies and the results are diverse. Khoiri and Widiati (2017) investigate logical fallacies in 40 argumentative writing essays of Indonesian EFL learners in a public university. The results show that students still produce many errors in their reasoning. Moreover, Alagozlu (2007) reports the results of his research on undergraduate students' essays in a literature class in the English department in terms of the elements of critical thinking and voice. The findings show that many claims are not supported by arguments that contain correct reasoning and correct proofs about the texts read by students. Students are found to simply copy and paste information from texts in their arguments without being accompanied by coherent logic. Another research done by Oktavia (2014) reveals that students in a public university in Indonesia are lacked adequate thinking skills in providing adequate pieces of evidence and facts to support their viewpoints. From twenty tasks analyzed, eight types of students' fallacious arguments are found. From these findings, she concludes that the students in this study made some

conclusions with too little analysis of the texts. Thus, the findings of these studies furnish insightful perspectives about students' fallacies and motivate other researchers to examine the areas under the same topic more deeply and diversely.

The findings of those previous studies left a gap that can be further explored. As far as I am concern, there might not be a lot of research in the EFL domain which focuses on the students' patterns of reasoning regarding the emergence of the students' fallacies. Most studies on the students' reasoning patterns have been hotly researched in the socioscientific field analyzed through essay writing assignments and oral tasks (Bell & Lederman, 2003; Patronis, Potari, & Spiliotopoulou, 1999; Sadler, Chambers, & Zeidler, 2004; Sadler & Zeidler, 2004; Sadler and Zeidler, 2005; Yang & Gao, 2003; Zeidler et al., 2002). Consequently, the students' use of patterns needs to be valued and guided so that the resulting arguments remain healthy, accurate, and based regardless of the patterns they use and fallacies as defective arguments can be minimized. It follows what is argued by Sadler and Zeidler (2005) that examining the quality of students' reasoning is as crucial as identifying the reasoning patterns that they employ.

Additionally, those preceding research yields another gap. Since most of them analyze logical fallacies in students' argumentative essays in higher-education contexts, the present study examines last year of senior high school students' Expositions, as one kind of argumentative essays, in their final writing practice exam as one of their graduation requirements (as mandated in the 2013 curriculum). Regarding this purpose, the current study focuses on seeking common logical fallacies made by the students in their essays in terms of manipulation through emotions, manipulation through distraction, and inductive fallacy (Mayfield, 2014). Subsequently, this study was firstly inspired by Brookhart (2010) who demonstrates that reasoning could even have arisen since childhood and should be observed in the school period. Besides, she enhances that reasoning is a part of human life so that children also reason in their interactions when performing arguments. Another reason is that as school-going children, they need to comprehend the skills of performing

sound and healthy arguments as an effort to prepare them to become adult learners and responsible citizens in dealing with rapidly growing social issues.

In brief, this study aims at examining the reasoning patterns employed by twelfth-grade students regarding their fallacies in writing Expositions assigned as their final writing exam. Second, the present study reveals common logical fallacies made by these students as found in their Expositions in terms of manipulation through emotions, manipulation through distraction, and inductive fallacy. The discussion is preceded by the reasoning patterns of informal reasoning employed by the students regarding their fallacies followed by the types of logical fallacies based on the framework proposed in this study.

1.2 Research Questions

Grounded in the aforementioned rationales, this study addresses two research questions as follows:

1. What reasoning patterns are commonly employed by twelfth-grade students regarding the fallacies in their Expositions?
2. What types of fallacies are commonly found in twelfth-grade students' Expositions?

1.3 Aims of the Study

Referring to the research questions proposed above, this study attempts to:

1. To reveal the reasoning patterns commonly employed by twelfth-grade students regarding the fallacies in their Expositions
2. To discover the types of fallacies commonly found in twelfth-grade students' Expositions

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study acknowledges some limitations. First, this study focuses on discovering logical fallacy types in 80 senior high school students' Expositions from their English writing exam as one of the students' graduations' requirement. Those

students participating in the exam had to write once and then directly submitted their writings to the teacher. In other words, they were not given any chance to revise those writings. Concerning a general suggestion that writing is recursive, it was assumed that this situation contributed to the many fallacies found in the students' Expositions. Subsequently, it was considered to be one of the significant limitations of this study. More thorough explanations about all the study limitations were described in the remainder of this paper. Next, as an attempt to investigate students' reasoning patterns, there were only 10 students (5 male and 5 female) randomly selected from those whose essays contain logical fallacies. These students were interviewed to see how they employed their reasoning regarding their fallacies in the essays. As a response to the subjectivity issue in identifying students' fallacies as explained in the previous studies, three inter-raters were recruited to ensure the reliability of the analysis. The students taking part in the essay writing come from one reputable school located in Bandung, Indonesia. Therefore, the analysis focused on the students' reasoning patterns utilized from the interview transcripts and their fallacy types as found in their Expositions. Thus, the contexts of this study are the students' common informal reasoning patterns used and their common fallacy types found in their Expositions in an Indonesian EFL classroom at the senior high school level.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Concerning limited research on studies on logical fallacies, the implication of this research is expected to undertake the following points.

Theoretically, the present study is expected to provide a thorough description of common informal reasoning patterns and logical fallacies in people's arguments based on the proposed framework. Although it is not the only approach in identifying fallacies, the explanation in this study is expected to enrich the literature in the field of reasoning and logical fallacies analyzed through students' Expositions or other argumentative essays.

Practically, I hope that this study presents new insights for those teachers who have usually focused on the common aspects of writing such as grammar, generic

structures, and language features. The findings may inspire those to also pay attention to students' coherence of essays as well as the development of their argumentation so that students can generate healthy arguments through a particular reasoning pattern. In other words, students' writing is also judged by what is actually behind their writing. Equally important, the findings can also serve as consideration for teachers in general and EFL teachers, in particular, to guide students during their process of reasoning to produce healthy, accurate, and based arguments and minimize the emergence of fallacies.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

The fundamental operational terms in this study were defined to prevent misunderstanding and misconception.

Argument : one of forms of verbal communication that uses reasoning (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1995; Walton, 1990). Its truth is refutable and usually presents a debatable issue. Its purpose is to get the reader's consent to one's core statement or tell readers that what the writer believes is a good one (Alagozlu, 2007; Driver, Gast, & Lowman-Thomas, 2016; Diaz-Hormazábal, 2007; Mayfield, 2014). It consists of, at least, the author's position on the issue and a supporting reason (Mayfield, 2014; Toulmin et al., 1984).

Logical fallacies : mistaken or bad arguments that take place when a reason does not sufficiently support a claim in lots of ways so that the logical validity of those arguments is undermined (Brookhart, 2010; Downes, 1995; Evans, 2002; Kemerling, 2002; Mayfield, 2014; Walton, 1990)

Exposition : one kind of argumentative essays assigned to the twelfth-grade students in Senior High School level based on the demand of the current curriculum written to establish a point of view on the topic by presenting sufficient reasons though evidential supports in a concise manner (“Argumentative essays”, n.d., para 1; Ka-kan-dee and Kaur, 2015; Macken-Horarik, 2002; MoEC, 2018)

1.7 Paper Organization

The paper in this study is organized into five chapters. Each section is presented with some sub-sections to provide an insight on the topic under investigation. These chapters are outlines as follows:

1. CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION. This paper provides background of the research, research questions, aims of study, significance of the study, clarification of terms, and paper organization.
2. CHAPTER II : THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK. This chapter presents theoretical framework related to the study. In detail, this chapter consists of the explanation about the concept of critical thinking, patterns of students’ informal reasoning, the concept of logical fallacies, students’ logical fallacies in argumentative writing, Exposition writing tasks in senior high school in Indonesia, and challenges and critiques against identifying students’ logical fallacies.
3. CHAPTER III : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This chapter presents the research methodology employed in conducting the study. This chapter involves the research design, subject of the research, data collection technique, and data analysis.
4. CHAPTER IV : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS. This chapter explains the findings and discussion as the result of the study. The findings of the study

elaborate the result of data analysis answering the research questions formulated previously and the discussion discusses the data of the study.

5. CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS. This chapter concludes the result of the study obtained from the collected data. This chapter also gives suggestions for the better improvement of the next study related to the same topic.