

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the general issue of the present study. It includes the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, scope of the study, the significances of the study, clarification of the key terms, and organization of the thesis.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

One of the most critical aspects which determine the quality of college students writing is the ability to construct evaluative and persuasive arguments (Jou, 2019; Lee & Deakin, 2016; Mingli, 2012; Wingate, 2012). Argumentative genre is an important and influential language process, which is essential for dealing with many aspects of school knowledge and effective social participation. Meanwhile, constructing argumentation requires the process of reasoning, persuasion, and evaluation (Knapp & Watkins, 2005) which could be realized by the proses of establishing critical stances, proposing logic and emotive arguments, and anticipating as well as countering a reader's reactions (Lee & Deakin, 2016). To this end, Hyland (2008) emphasizes the importance of engagement in writing argumentative text as a way to construct the writer's position and to build relationships between the writer and the readers or between the writer and another text.

A considerable amount of studies have confirmed that the concept of engagement serves as a discourse semantic resources that is significant in determining the quality of argumentative writing (Chang & Scheleppegrell, 2011; Cheung & Low, 2014; Cheung, et al., 2018; Lam & Crosthwaite, 2018; Mori, 2017; Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014; Ryshina-Pankova, 2014; Yoon, 2017). Engagement is the writers' effort to communicate with the readers by involving the readers as discourse participants (Hyland, 2008) with respect to their positions advanced in the text (Hyland, 2001). It consists of various linguistic resources to bridge the transmission of the writers' ideas because those ideas are not transferred directly from the writer's to the reader's mind, otherwise, they are represented by

the presence of language sources (Mccambridge, 2019). The concept of engagement is also concerned with the way to convey personal attitude, judgment, and opinions as well as acknowledgment of alternative voices in a text (Martin & White, 2005). Particularly, it is “the degree of alignment in which writers acknowledge and engage with the other texts by presenting themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral with regard to their value positions” (Martin & White, 2005, p.95).

Lee and Deakin (2016) believe that the effective use of engagement strategy in argumentative writing could bolster a writer’s affective position toward the content and the readers which leads to the establishment of the writer-reader rapport. Furthermore, by applying the linguistics resources that establish engagement, writers would be able to acknowledge the source texts, show how evidence from source texts relates to their claims, manage multiple perspectives (Pessoa, Mitchell & Reilly, 2019), and ultimately construct a text that is regarded as effectively persuasive because it addresses the interlocutors’ discursive goals (van Eemeren, 2018). At this point, Mori (2017) asserted that the categories of engagement system has covered all the requirement of effective argumentative writing such as taking a stance, countering or acknowledging the other perspectives, and providing external sources to support argumentation.

Apart from those, Cheung and Low (2017) argue that in order to improve the quality of students’ argumentative writing, it is recommended to provide explicit instruction of engagement resources in the classroom context. This concern is relevant to Rose’s (2006) statement that students preferably learn L2 writing through explicit teaching of language and immersion in a diverse range of purposeful and increasingly demanding language experiences. More importantly, according to Chang and Schelepppegrell (2011), the use of Engagement framework based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in writing instruction could provide the linguistic basis of the rhetorical choices that are available to effectively develop and deploy their arguments. This perspective was also strengthened by a finding from Mori (2017) which reveal that students can improve their quality of

writing by providing instruction and discussion of the language resources that represented engagement.

The potential use of explicit instruction of engagement system in teaching argumentative text, unfortunately, has not been supported by conclusive empirical research in the field of L2 writing pedagogy. Studies of engagement in L2 writing which have been conducted by several researchers mostly concerned with textual analysis, such as examining the number of engagement features in specific genres (Almutairi, 2019; Cheung & low, 2017; Lai, 2010; Lancaster, 2014; Liardét & Black, 2019; Mesa & Chang, 2010; Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014; O'Hallaron & Schleppegrell, 2016; Ryshina-Pankova, 2014; Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi, 2017; Xu & Nesi, 2019) or comparing high and low achieving students in constructing engagement (Cheung & low, 2017; Handayani, Drajati & Ngadiso, 2020; Lancaster, 2014; Lee & Deakin, 2016).

The lack of empirical researches investigating the way instructors explicitly teach engagement strategies in L2 writing classroom thus remain questions of what pedagogical approach that could support students in constructing engagement resources in their writing. This, thereby, indicates that many more studies investigating L2 writers' construction of engagement mediated by a certain pedagogical technique are essentially needed. Toward that issue, this study wanted to highlight the rigor of dialogic feedback approach in aiding students to gain awareness over engagement resources.

The reasons for applying the approach was considered the potential of dialogic approach to feedback in guiding students' learning. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is a key pedagogical strategy in supporting student learning development. Feedback is a part of pedagogy, in which many scholars have reached a consensus that the transmission of it should be shifted from traditional feedback which only teacher correction on the students' task, towards more interactive and dialogic (Carless, et al. 2011). Sutton (2009) argues that the focus of feedback should not only on how to transmit the feedback but also on how it enables students to effectively "feed-forward" feedback. This issue has further called for a notion called dialogic approach to feedback that is a feedback process

which is mainly categorized by an interactive exchange, negotiating meanings, sharing interpretations, and clarifying expectations (Carless et al., 2011). This dialogic perspective to feedback believes that feedback is a social process and a communicative act that involves emotion, power, and discourse to impact the process of how the messages are constructed, interpreted, and acted upon (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018). To be clear, the concept of dialogic feedback emphasizes the role of dialogue in delivering feedback and involves students in interpretive meaning-making about the feedback comments (Steen-Utheim & Wittek 2017).

Moreover, to reach the effectiveness of the dialogic feedback process, Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) use interactional analysis theory for conceptualizing the distinctive features of dialogic feedback. The model holds four potentialities for student learning from the feedback, which are emotional and relational support, maintenance of the feedback dialogue, opportunities for students to express themselves, and the other's contribution to individual growth. In the same manner, the other principle which is also considered crucial by numerous scholars (Alexander, 2008b; Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Carless et al., 2011; Yang & Carless, 2013; Gillies, 2015) to be implemented in dialogic feedback is ensuring students to have ability in analytical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving. To emphasize, the combination of the five principles could be a guideline for teachers in applying dialogic feedback as a way to scaffold students' awareness of the learning topic.

Furthermore, the huge contribution of dialogic feedback to the students' learning development has been proved by several previous studies (Adie, Kleij, & Cumming, 2018; Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Dann, 2015; Nicol, 2010). Those studies essentially show that dialogic feedback is a meaningful pedagogical technique in supporting students' learning. However, it is unfortunate that none of the studies are specifically addressing the issue of whether or not dialogic feedback could mediate the students' awareness and development in constructing engagement.

Concerning the issue, this present study attempts to fill the gap by employing the framework of dialogic feedback process (Ajjawi & Boud, 2015) and five dimensions of dialogic feedback (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018; Alexander, 2008b;

Carless et al., 2011; Yang & Carless, 2013; Gillies, 2015; Steen-Utheim & Wittek 2017) as well as engagement theory (Martin & white, 2005), to explore how the framework can serve as a heuristic model to highlight the features of dialogic feedback interaction and to examine the role of dialogic feedback in mediating the construction and development of engagement resource in students' argumentative text.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the problems, this study aims to investigate the emergence of engagement in students' argumentative writing by answering the following research questions:

- a. How is the dialogic feedback implemented to support students in constructing engagement in their argumentative writing?
- b. How does the process of online dialogic feedback contribute to the establishment of engagement in the students' argumentative writing?

## **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

Referring to the research questions, the purpose of this study is to investigate the practice of dialogic feedback in the teaching writing of argumentative text, as the way to identify the specific features of teacher-students dialogic interaction in developing students' construction of engagement resources. Further, it also intends to explore how engagement resource is reflected in the student' argumentative texts to examine the degree to which the dialogic feedback could form engagement in their writing.

## **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the features of engagement resources (Martin & White, 2005) in students' argumentative writing that are mediated by the interaction of teacher-students or students and their peers in dialogic feedback process. It explores how the practice of dialogic feedback in teaching L2 writing could open up for dialogic space between teachers and students and how this interaction possibly contributes to the creation of engagement in students' writing.

### 1.5 The Significance of the Study

This study is expected to support the knowledge of the current limited understanding, particularly in Indonesian context, of how a pedagogical technique may influence the students' ability in constructing engagement in academic writing. This, in turn, may raise awareness among L2 writing instructors and students about the proper way of voicing. The findings, hopefully, could offer some evidence-based insights of how L2 students' learning to construct engagement in their writing, and generate useful implications about how such learning can be facilitated and supported in EFL writing classrooms.

### 1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms

#### a. Engagement in writing

Engagement resource is concerned with the sourcing of personal attitude, judgment, and opinions as well as acknowledgment of alternative voices in a text (Martin & White, 2005). In other words, it is linguistic resources for establishing individual stances, inserting external sources and looking closely at the choices available for evaluating these sources (Wang, 2016).

Grounded on the theory of engagement resources proposed by Martin and White (2005) and Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogic space, there are two discursive features of engagement namely Monoglossia and Heteroglossia. Heteroglossia is divided into several categories; Disclaim: deny, Disclaim: counter, Proclaim: pronounce, Proclaim: concur, Proclaim: endorse, Proclaim: justify, Entertain and Attribute. In this study, the analysis process was done by parsing the students' texts into clauses and all of the clauses were coded with reference to this engagement framework.

#### b. Dialogic Feedback

Feedback is generally defined as: "the process of providing some commentary on student work in which a teacher reacts to the ideas, assesses a student's strengths and weaknesses, and suggests directions for improvement" (Mccdonald, 1991). Meanwhile, dialogic feedback based on Steen-Utheim and Wittek, (2017), is

learning about and from feedback that takes place through dialogue. It involves students in interpretational meaning-making about the feedback, encourages them to express their ideas and probes questions that make them reflect on their understanding.

In this study, dialogic feedback process was started through the students' results of argumentative text. The researcher, who acted as the tutor, then construed feedback on the students' text and communicate or open up dialogue with students regarding the feedback. Moreover, due to the pandemic situation in which all schools and universities are turned to be fully online meeting, this study intentionally utilized an online platform, which is WhatsApp group application, as the media where the dialogic feedback process take place.

#### c. Argumentative text

Keskitalo (2014) argues that argumentative text is a combination of a claim, reasons, and warrants. Its main purposes are to anticipate a real or imagined difference of opinion about a controversial issue (Ferretti & Graham, 2019) and to reinforce or alter a reader's relation to a subject, person, or phenomenon (Keskitalo, 2014). This present study mainly involved the types of argumentative text which clearly portray the students' voice on the topic given, such as argumentative essay.

### **1.7 Research Report Organization**

The organization of the study is presented in five chapters.

- a. Chapter one is introduction. It consists of background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of the key terms, and research report organization.
- b. Chapter two discusses the theories related to engagement in writing and dialogic feedback. It includes the concept of engagement in L2 writing, engagement in argumentative text, dialogic feedback and the establishment of engagement, and engagement categories. This chapter also displays some previous studies related to the topic.

- c. Chapter three deals with research methodology such as research design, the site and participants, data collections, data collection procedure, and data analysis.
- d. Chapter four provides findings and discussions from the analysis of data sources, i.e., records of feedback dialogues, students' argumentative writing, and interview with the students.
- e. Chapter five provides conclusions, suggestions, and recommendations derived from the study.