

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background of the study, aims of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, clarification of the key terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Within the context of EFL classrooms, it is quite common to find classes with a high number of students. Even though the size of an ideal classroom in many countries ranged variably under 20 students and one teacher who manage the lesson, sometimes the reality is still far from that. For teachers who need to face about 40 students in one class—the condition that is happening widely in Indonesia—the job could be overwhelming. The main reason why the government opt for having such classroom is probably due to the economic constraints, however the limits in budget may result in a quick and convenient cost-cutting strategy—even though it risks the quality of learning (Cuseo, 2007). The quality of learning can be influenced since large classes could affect the teachers' capability to pay attention to individual students and their specific needs, as well as in managing the amount of materials that needs to be covered (Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, & Willms, 2001). Ehrenberg, et al. (2001) then concluded that class size can be a potential variable in determining how much students learn.

When we talk about writing classes in particular, to be able to facilitate students to write better, one of the ways is to include feedback for revision before writing assignment is collected. Unfortunately, when the feedback source relies heavily on teachers, this is almost impractical in large classes. Wu (1993) in his study looked for the possible significant problems encountered in large classes. One of the findings is that teachers' burden to teach about three classes with approximately 150 students in total makes it hard for them to have more time in monitoring students' work or giving feedback, or making correction in their paper works. In the end, the teacher usually let the students to collect their works and let

them be piled for direct scoring. The process of giving feedback for revision is often overlooked. As a consequence, students' progress in writing may not be put into priority for the reasons of practicality such other materials to teach in demand or some administrative business that the teachers need to do. Rather than focusing on students' progress, they may prioritize more on finishing the materials on time. The teachers, then, may only look at the competence of students based on the end product instead of carefully measuring each and every student's progress in the process of writing. Even though the research was conducted in China, the same problem is also encountered by Indonesian English teachers. Added by the curriculum demands of making students to have four-skills competence in English, accompanied by the obligation to deliver high stack of materials in a relatively short time, the condition is not helpful for teachers. However, regardless of how hard it may seem to include feedback in the writing class, it still cannot be disregarded. Even in a general perspective, MacGregor, Cooper, Smith, and Robinson (as cited in Cuseo, 2007) mentioned that when it is necessary to endorse active and interactive learning, personal validation and frequent feedback to students' work should not be militated by the anonymity of large classes. Therefore, as an attempt to reach the ideal picture within limitations, the best policy would be for teachers to create or adapt activities that still support students' learning without placing teachers in a higher burden they cannot cope up with.

According to Susanti (2013), in Indonesia it is common to have feedback given by teachers seeing that "teachers are the people who are educated to teach and correct their students' assignments while students are people who have to receive the corrections and obey every instruction from their teachers" (Susanti, 2013, p. 1-2). However, to rely on teacher feedback in the aforementioned condition may result in no feedback at all at worst. This can be a loss for a class since feedback is considered as one of the tools for evaluation. Costa and Kallick (2004) suggested that we must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to have students learn to become self-evaluative. With only relying on teacher feedback, together with assumption that students are "people who have to receive the correction and obey every instruction from their

teachers” (Susanti, 2013, p. 1-2), the chance of students evaluating themselves is minimal since they are only obeying the instruction of teachers. Self-directed feedback, which was chosen as an independent variable in the study, could be one of the solutions. The technique is carrying the value of learner autonomy, as stated by Cresswell (2000, p. 235) that “The student self-monitoring technique increases autonomy in the learning of writing by giving learners control over the initiation of feedback.” Not to mention, in large classrooms when it is hard for teachers to pay attention to the students’ individual needs, having autonomous learners can enable them to adjust to their own pace. As was stated by Singer, Togo, Mochizuki, and Tanaka (2010), students progress differently according to their speed and fluency in writing. Therefore, having students to learn autonomously will enable them to work based on their individual pace, without having to wait for others when they are considerably fast or struggling to chase their friends when they are slower (Singer et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, the growing research under the topic of feedback on writing has been focused more on peer response or peer evaluation (Lin, 2009; Cresswell, 2000) while actually self monitoring also involves ‘reader-based prose’ which is also endorsed by peer evaluation (Chandrasegaran, 1989 as cited in Cresswell, 2000). Lin (2009) in his research combined three major reasons why self-directed feedback has attracted less attention from researchers and practitioners, namely; the difficulty to verify the effect of correction (C h a u d r o n , 1 9 8 8 , a s c i t e d i n M a k i n o , 1 9 9 3); students’ lack of capability in trying to effectively articulate their concerns with their developing interlanguage when focusing on grammar items at the expense of content and organization development (Cresswell, 2000); and students’ assumption that correcting the essays is under the responsibility of teacher only. However, these challenges to apply self-directed feedback can be overcome by the addition of careful planning in activity design, especially in pre-writing stage in which teacher can introduce and model the skills of invention (Lin, 2009). Cresswell (2000) also stated that self-monitoring acknowledges the need for feedback since it allows learners to draw attention to the critical item in its context and therefore obtain

either informed correction, or positive feedback, to support acquisition and establish the item in the productive range. While the benefits of having self-monitoring technique in the classroom are apparent, these challenges should not restrain the real attempt for teachers to give better pedagogical practices inside their classrooms.

At last, considering the importance of having better practice in teaching writing in large classrooms through autonomous learning, together with the fact that self-directed feedback may create the opportunities to raise students' awareness on writing, the study sought to design a study connecting both of the components to be put into practice in an EFL classroom.

1.2 Aims of Study

This study aimed to investigate the application of self-directed feedback in a writing classroom and how it may affect their skills in writing. Furthermore, it also wished to find out the students' response towards the application of self-directed feedback in their writing activity.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In order to accomplish the aims of the study, the study was guided by several questions;

- 1.3.1 To what extent does self-directed feedback affect the students' writing skills?
- 1.3.2 What is the students' response to the inclusion of self-directed feedback in their writing activity?

1.4 Significance of the Study

There are two points of significance which are expected to come from the study as follows:

1.4.1 Theoretical significance

Until the present time, the majority of research done under the topic of self-directed feedback only used undergraduate students as the research subjects. At the very same time, almost all of the research also suggested a further

investigation on the use of self-directed feedback to learners studying in the earlier stage. Therefore, the result of the study is expected to enrich the literature on the issue, as well as to give a reference for further research under the same topic.

1.4.2 Practical significance

Uplifting students' desire to write, increasing their awareness of the importance of writing, as well as facilitating improvement in writing are the goals of many EFL teachers for their writing classroom. In order to pursue them, the teachers need to have an endless patience to carry out fruitful writing activities. Self-directed feedback, as one of the activities recommended by several researchers might be one of the solutions. Hence, the study is expected to be one of the references to be adapted to the practical level for teachers surrounded in similar contexts.

1.5 Clarification of Related Terms

To the extent of the study, some terms are clarified as follows.

- a. ***Self-directed feedback***: is a kind of feedback which is provided by the student to his/her own text of which the purpose is, according to Lin (2009), "to raise awareness of the important elements and conventions in the process of composing essays, and helps students to acquire them in order to become independent and competent writers." In this paper the term is interchangeable with self feedback.
- b. ***Learner autonomy***: according to Benson (2006), autonomy in learning refers to a condition when people take more control over their learning inside and outside the classroom.
- c. ***Writing***: in this study, the writing refers to the one that follows process approach to writing. Process approach to writing includes different stages of writing to be exposed to students, including the presence of feedback. Therefore, the writing is focused on students' development while writing the text, not the end product.

- d. **Report Text:** According to Palmer (2010), a report text is a text that talks about a single topic of which the purpose is to describe the characteristic of an object, and the examples can be found in encyclopedia entry, information leaflet, or a magazine article.
- e. **Error/mistake:** in this study is used interchangeably. Both are defined in its most general meaning, which is something that the students produced which is not suitable to the correct form. The criteria of the correct form of each aspect are different from one another. This will be explained later.
- f. **Progress:** refers to when students correct the mistake he/she made in the subsequent draft.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

The research paper is organized into five chapters, as follows.

Chapter one introduces a brief description of the study which includes background of the study, aims of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, clarification of the key terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter two focuses on the theoretical foundations that are related to the study. It discussed three major points important to the study, which are writing, self-directed feedback, and learner autonomy.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the research, which includes the research design, site and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter four discusses findings and discussion from the study.

Chapter five covers conclusion and suggestions derived from the result of the study.