

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the introduction of the research, which covers several aspects. It elaborates the background of the study, the research questions, the research objectives, the significance of the study, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

The teaching paradigm has shifted from memorizing and transferring knowledge to encouraging learners to use higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). HOTS encourage students to adapt and make meaning of what they learn to address issues in the real world through analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information (Bloom et al., 1956; Roets & Maritz, 2017; Vijayaratnam, 2012; Zohar & Cohen, 2016). By implementing HOTS, learners' cognitive skills are expected to be well developed, illustrated by increasing students' academic achievement and performance (Daher et al., 2017; Hausman et al., 2016; Tanujaya et al., 2017). Due to its importance, HOTS have emerged in all learning areas, including language teaching (Li, 2016; Osman & Kassim, 2015).

As class organizers, teachers are encouraged to promote higher thinking in language teaching. Through those skills, teachers are expected to develop students' higher critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving (Indriyana & Kuswandono, 2019; Lutvita et al., 2020; Setiawan et al., 2018). It means learning is not limited to gaining knowledge but also understanding the power of language use in a broader and actual context. Teachers are expected to encourage the students to see the bigger picture of the text without relying on teachers' help. However, this attempt faces challenges through time. The typical challenge is that not all classrooms and teachers are facilitated to teach higher-order thinking systematically. In some cases, teachers are taught to understand higher-order thinking but not trained how to teach that in the classroom (Kusumastuti et al., 2019; Schulz & FitzPatrick, 2016). Moreover, teachers still prefer conventional teaching methods for some reasons (Seman et al., 2017; Yen & Halili, 2015). Hence, it is essential to explore the teachers' attempt to promote HOTS to improve the teaching and learning experience later.

In the current situation of the covid-19 pandemic, the teaching process allows teachers to flexibly teach without having intense physical interaction with many students through online media. However, online teaching is something new to most teachers. The technology supports vary from one school to another and make it more challenging to promote higher-order thinking skills. There might be a considerable number of studies on teachers' perception and practices towards HOTS (Ardini, 2018; Mursyid & Kurniawati, 2019; Retnawati et al., 2018; Setyarini, 2020; Setyarini et al., 2018; Utami, et al., 2019), but few studies of its practice in online media. Studies of online learning under the distance education umbrella were primarily conducted in higher education as its practice needs self-regulation and independence from the students. For instance, Johansson (2020) found that lecturers promoted HOTS among university students in an online environment through e-assessment in essay writing and seminar, which are unlikely to appear at higher school level. McLoughlin and Mynard (2009) also studied higher-order thinking skills on online learning and revealed that promoting HOTS could be conducted through online discussion that allowed students to share their reason and contradict each other opinions. However, it required very careful prompt and guidelines from the lecturer so that the students were not hesitant to speak up.

There are also a few studies under the distance learning umbrella in Indonesia since the covid-19 pandemic stroke, but it mainly investigated students' and teachers' learning experiences or behaviors. Rinekso and Muslim (2020) revealed that university students positively perceived online discussion through synchronous media as they believed it encouraged their critical thinking skills and improved writing skills through chatting. This study also found out that the main problem of the synchronous learning process was the unstable internet connection. Suharti et al. (2021) investigated students' engagement in online learning using Dixson's Online Student Engagement Scale. The findings implied that the teachers' strategies in questioning and prompting contributed to a successful online discussion, such as understanding students' interests. Online learning also provided students to be more autonomy. Hidayati and Husna (2020) found that online learning was usually initiated with videos or presentations followed by discussions and assignments. The teachers' guides were very few, so they had to figure out the assignments

independently. It encouraged students to be autonomous, but the learning process was perceived as assignment delivering that distressed students.

According to previous studies, the current study found some gaps to fill in, in terms of objectives, methodology, and settings. Since most of the studies focused on online interaction, the current study explicitly concerns higher-order thinking skills in online learning. The current study employed revised Bloom taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) in data analysis regarding the methodology. Last but not least, the current study tried to contribute studies on promoting higher-order thinking skills through online English learning at the secondary school level.

The participants in this study were two English teachers of X and XI grades. The study results were expected to provide insights into teachers' perceptions and practices of higher-order thinking promotion in the online teaching process and the challenges they encounter.

1.2 The research questions

This study was conducted under the following research questions:

1. How do the teachers promote students' higher-order thinking skills through online learning?
2. What challenges do they encounter in promoting HOTS in online learning?

1.3 Purposes of the study

By investigating teachers' efforts to promote higher-order thinking in online teaching, this study intended to reveal:

1. the teachers' strategies of promoting students' higher-order thinking skills in online learning,
2. challenges in promoting students' higher-order thinking skills through online learning.

1.4 Significances of the study

The results of the study were expected to provide the following contributions:

1. Theoretically, to enrich the literature on promoting higher-order thinking skills practices.
2. Professionally, to help teachers understand the principles of teaching higher-order thinking skills in the online environment and cope with the obstacles in the classroom.
3. For the decision-makers, to help them construct some policies and strategies which encourage teachers to promote higher-order thinking skills in a particular circumstance.

1.5 Paper organization

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction section providing the information of what and why the study was conducted, illustrated in the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes, and the significances of the study. Chapter 2 is the literature review that explains the theories underlying the study. Chapter 3 illustrates how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study and discussions. The last is chapter 5 that provides conclusions, limitations, and recommendations.