

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the development of learners' autonomy in EFL reading class. This study encompassed action research framework because it was in line with learner-centered approach. The study started in 2006 and was conducted in two semesters with a class of civil engineering students and the managing staff of SALL at Politeknik Negeri Bandung.

To investigate the development of the learners, this study was conducted in three cycles starting with a diagnostic phase. This phase was carried out to analyze the students' needs, wants, interests and the learning environment. It was directly followed by three cycles of treatments. The results of this longitudinal study might be used to enrich the process of teaching and learning English in Indonesia.

This chapter puts forward the conclusion of the study in section 5.1, and some suggestions for future studies and some limitations of the study are presented in section 5.2 which also serves as the last part of this report.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

During three cycles of treatments, the students' language learning autonomy developed in various degrees. The degrees ranged from being novice to those of experienced or autonomous language learners. These were indicated in the development of the four components of learner autonomy i.e. learning purpose (Littlewood, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Ellis 1994; Ridley, 1997; Griffiths, 2003; Nuttal, 1989; Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991; Aebersold and Field 1998), knowledge, skills, and willingness – motivation and confidence (Littlewood, 1996). In the diagnostic phase, these students did not have genuine language learning purposes; when reading in English class, their sole purposes were to obtain the information from the texts. They had limited language and learning knowledge and skills or strategies. They

also had low willingness because they had low motivation to learn the language; their motivation was to pass the final examination despite being aware of their language limitations and the fact that English could help them obtain better career in the future and they had low self-confidence because they perceived that they had limited language knowledge.

Modelings, especially peer modelings, and practicing conducted either in the classroom or SALL using various topics and levels of reading materials enhanced the students' learning strategies. Carefully selected authentic reading texts developed the students' confidence and encouraged them to read and obtain English exposures, and therefore selecting texts required much attention. However, for most students who had low motivation to learn English and limited language learning strategies, authentic materials might distract their language learning purposes. Materials designed for SALL purposes enhanced the students' learning autonomy, but these materials might also bore the students because majority of the topics available in this SALL were not in line with the students' majoring subjects. Therefore, the selection of reading materials needed to be based on the learning purpose, learners' interests, learning activities and learners' language proficiency.

At the beginning, these students' strategies to solve their problems in reading were social strategies and low level cognitive and metacognitive strategies i.e directly consulting bilingual dictionaries, applying word-for-word translation or inquiring the more able people. The students' learning purposes were not to learn the language and they rarely monitored nor evaluated their reading. They maintained their motivation by having false 'loci of value and success' because the value and success were to entertain themselves and pass the English tests respectively.

However, after three-cycles of treatments, especially after having some models and practices at the end of Cycle 2 and 3, the students were able to identify a variety of specific problems. To solve their perceived problems, they were orchestrating more appropriate high and low cognitive strategies. They maintained their motivation by having genuine 'loci of control, value and success' because they identified their problems which later became their learning purposes.

Subsequently they were able to control their own learning, accomplish their set goals, construct meanings successfully, and obtain their self-confidence. As a result of the treatments, the students' language knowledge and skills developed and some of them were aware of their improvements and gained confidence.

In general, the paths of the development of the four components progressed from enjoyment of physical activities to mental activities. First, the students' learning purposes developed from learning for enjoyment to learning to solve their perceived language problems, improving their English, and enhancing learning and thinking strategies. Their purposes were influenced by their levels of language proficiency, beliefs and learning preferences.

Second, the students' motivation developed from having activities to entertain themselves toward having genuine 'loci of control, value and success'. During high schools, they experienced 'external regulation' or they did not have their own 'locus of control', they were tightly controlled by other authorities; and their motivation was to pass the tests. However, when they shifted to genuine language learning purposes they obtained 'locus of control' and subsequently 'locus of value', which then led these students to acquire 'locus of success'. Finally, the students achieved 'loci of control, value and success'. The speed and the quality of these loci were influenced by the students' perceived problems, purposes, and language proficiency.

The students' 'locus of success' promoted their confidence. They improved from merely being able to use the language to obtain information from authentic texts to being able to use their adopted strategies adopted to solve their immediate problems. Finally a number of students gained confidence for being able to do challenging exercises and solve their laden problems. The improvement of students' confidence depended on their proficiency, learning skills, motivation and beliefs. The students' improvement in motivation and confidence boosted willingness to learn the language.

The students' knowledge was measured from their awareness of their language knowledge and learning strategy. Their knowledge awareness developed from general knowledge to more specific ones. At the diagnostic phase, they believed that English could be learned and acquired from having fun activities but

they did not know how to improve their language through these activities. In C1, these students, except for two, obtained some knowledge favorable to enrich their social lives and knowledge of strategies favorable to maintain their social lives. In C2 and C3 a growing number of students obtained similar language knowledge and learning strategies in various clusters. The language knowledge developed from obtaining vocabulary, to grammar, to morphemes and sentences, then discourses. The strategy knowledge developed from low level cognitive strategies to compensation strategies and further developed to knowledge of how to apply these strategies. Each strategy cluster led to self-learning awareness which developed from physical awareness to mental learning awareness. The development of these awareness depended on the students' learning purposes, perceived problems and language proficiency.

The students' skills or strategies developed from skills to do physical activities to cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Their language skills developed from copying to reporting their thoughts when writing journals or presenting oral reports. Their learning strategies in constructing meanings developed from applying physical strategies or low level strategies such as consulting dictionary, asking and copying, to high level cognitive strategies such as analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing and relating to wider contexts.

Then, it can be concluded that the treatments which provide knowledge of language and learning strategies to cater for students' perceived problems have encouraged learners to identify their own language and learning problems and set their learning purposes. These, in turn, assisted learners to acquire the language and learning skills and improved learners' awareness of the knowledge learned and acquired. Finally they gain self-confidence to learn the language independently which is in line with their learning environment. Therefore, the quality of the learners' autonomy are in line with the quality of the students' perceived problems and learning purposes which are influenced by the students' language proficiency, learning experience, background, and beliefs.

The English lecturers are, then, expected to collaborate with the learners, to provide language knowledge and exposures various models and practices presented proportionally starting from enjoyable activities. In the mean time,

lecturers are expected to encourage students to be willing to apply their high level learning strategies which will result in a shift from ‘school knowledge’ to ‘action knowledge’ (Barnes, 1976 cited in Little, 1998). In other words, learners require encouragement to be ‘good studiers’ and ‘good acquirers’ (Holec, 1987).

## 5.1 Suggestions and Limitation

The results of this study show that the quality of the learners’ autonomy depends on how the students perceive their problems. Then to promote language learning autonomy, it is suggested that English lecturers guide learners to identify their own problems, lead them to hold genuine learning purposes by controlling the materials and assignments and providing them with various models and ample practices. The assignments are deliberated to require learners to apply their cognitive strategies and make use of their knowledge proportionally so that more language knowledge and strategies are learned, internalized, and acquired.

This study had some impacts on the both the students and the managing staff of SALL. At the end of the study, two male students approached the lecturer to inform her that they had selected substantial English novels ‘Harry Porter’ to be read during semester break. A year later, a group of female students approached the lecturer and requested help to write an English abstract for their internship report despite being non-compulsory. They wrote their English abstract at home and revised it together with the lecturer. These reflected their willingness to spend time and energy for English exposures, and to learn, and practice the language. This had never occurred before the study was conducted.

A few months after the study ended, one of the administration staff of SALL voluntarily produced a simple Standard Operation Procedure dealing with how to select and use the SALL materials. She, then, organized the steps in pictures and attached them on SALL board. A year later, when the head of SALL attended a conference, she voluntarily attended a presentation dealing with the use of SALL and this presentation made her interested in learning more about SALL. Then, she planned to attend a set of Self-Access courses in institutions which held this course. These impacts showed that related parties need to undertake further actions as soon as possible and to obtain better language

learning environment and results, English lecturers and managing staff of SALL are advised to collaborate with the lecturers of learners' majoring subjects.

English lecturers need to provide learners with SALL trainings; these trainings will allow learners to practice language learning management and take full advantage of SALL programs well. Since students are in various stages of development, they need individualized treatments. In other words, the lecturers are to be SALL counsellors. The lecturers release some learning control to the students by allowing the learners to decide and select from various materials covering various degrees of difficulties and for various goals. For these purposes, to provide good SALL program, the managing staff of SALL should be qualified.

The SALL materials need to be wide-ranging, well designed and well managed for a superior accessibility. Well designed SALL materials will assist, stimulate, and encourage learners to focus on their learning purposes and evaluate their works. It is suggested that these materials attract and encourage learners to learn and acquire the language. SALL materials need to be continuously developed either by the classroom lectures or, if possible, by the students themselves guided by the lecturers which will be more challenging for the students and the lecturers.

To assist learners in obtaining genuine language learning purposes, the students need to see their immediate language needs. The majoring subject lecturers can also encourage their students to learn English by encouraging them to read English references and write short reports in English.

Treatments for individual learners, the development of English lecturers, materials - particularly designed for SALL-, and learners' wider learning environment, need to be addressed for the next study. In addition, this study holds weaknesses that are expected to be overcome by the future studies.

First, this action research was conducted by the researcher, ideally it was to be conducted by a group of lecturers to reduce biases. The students could be interviewed more freely, and they would not be reluctant to tell their genuine feeling and ideas; observation could be conducted more thoroughly and field notes could be written more accurately. Field notes and journals could be interpreted by more than one researcher to increase impartiality.

Second, although this study was conducted in two semesters, the researcher did not have much time to conduct interviews intensively because of the time constraints. Ideally, there should be intensive interviews to obtain highly accurate data of each student could, particularly when evaluating the students' motivation and the level of learners' confidence. If the students' motivation and level of confidence can be identified accurately, treatments and guidance can be given appropriately and learners' learning autonomy can be accelerated. This surely needs time, patience and supports because learning English is not the students' main goal.

Third, this study was conducted in only one class in Politeknik Negeri Bandung, the results might not be applicable for other classes, because the demands of the students' majoring subjects influenced their learning environment and purposes. It would be better if this study was conducted in several classes of various departments and if possible in other polytechnics including universities, in order to attain more valid and applicable results.