CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents the background of the study. This chapter also includes research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance, clarification of terms and paper organization.

A. Background

English has been introduced in Indonesia since elementary school. Partly, it is because of the rapidly developing technology of the English speaking countries and the fact that there are 300 million native speakers of English and over 250 million of non-native speakers who use English in the world (Broughton et al., 1980). The second reason is that the assumption that younger learners have advantages in learning second language more successfully than adults (Saville-Troike, 2006). Hence, Indonesian primary students need to master speaking English.

To master speaking English, those students need to have an opportunity to use the language actively. Children can be active when they have the opportunities in practicing the language with others (Pinter, 2006). Other people, Vygotsky (1962) cited in Cameron (2001) stated, play important roles in helping children to learn, bringing objects and ideas to their attention, talking while playing and about playing,

reading stories, and asking questions. Children learn by interacting with other people through speaking. Therefore, interaction is essential for children in learning English.

Children need to interact both with their teacher and their classmates. Through interacting with their teacher and classmates, students would possibly get feedbacks. Feedbacks are essential in learning because it lets students know what has been learned and what has not yet been understood and it also possibly gives students motivation (Wragg, 2001). However, many Indonesian teachers tend to give feedbacks in discouraging way such as pointing out mistakes in front of the classroom. Therefore, when students interact with their teacher, many Indonesian students are afraid or shy to say words in English. When students speak in front of the class, they have a feeling of being judged by their teacher. Therefore, because many Indonesian teachers tend to give feedback in discouraging way, feedbacks need to be delivered in supportive ways.

In terms of supportive ways, Moon (2005) stated that there are three support types teachers can provide to their students which are language, techniques/resources, and children themselves. Teachers should adjust their language to children's level of language. Teachers also should give appropriate techniques which support children to be confident in speaking English. One of the techniques is grouping which is related with the third support that is children themselves. Children can support each other in groups through three ways: (1) by watching other children, (2) by listening to and

getting help from other children, and (3) by practising with other children (Moon, 2005). Therefore, working in small groups is a way to make children be more confident in speaking English.

Grouping is a technique that I apply in my teaching context. My students love working in groups. They enjoy working on task given based on the lesson topic for that day. They interact with their groupmates to solve the task. Unfortunately, the daily tasks do not give long-term context for students to interact continually. In order to make them to do so, the students should be given a long term project which is now suggested by the proponents of Project Based Learning. Through project, the students are encouraged to search information outside classroom. The information later will be used to exchange knowledge inside classroom. Therefore, Project Based Learning makes the learning processes become meaningful and students' interaction last continually.

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a learning strategy which let students exchange information continually along a project. It is the instructional strategy of empowering learners to pursue content knowledge on their own and demonstrate their new understandings through a variety of presentation modes (Stripling et al, 2009). This strategy can be used as one of the effective ways in increasing students' interaction because the students will interact continually to complete a project.

PBL involves a group of learners taking on an issue close to their hearts, developing a response, and presenting the results to a wider audience (Wrigley, 1998). This makes PBL bring some advantages. The first advantage of PBL is that it gives freedom for students to choose what project they want to make as long as it is related with topics in the curriculum (Thomas, 2000). It surely engages students more in their learning. The second advantage is that it involves lot of interaction in groups. Interacting in groups reduces students' anxiety in speaking English because they will not be afraid of being judged by others (Brown, 2001). The third advantage is that it increases students' achievement through student-driven investigation (Thomas, 2000).

A study by Gaer (1998) to a population of Southeast Asian Lao, Hmong, Mien, and Lahu refugees, who had been in beginning-level ESOL classes, showed that PBL involves lot of students' interaction. Through a project of storytelling, the students had to discuss together on how they would deliver their local folktales to the middle school students. By holding meetings, the students finally could deliver their local folktales to the middle school students successfully.

PBL has not only successfully increased students' interaction in the adult classroom context, it also has successfully increased students interaction in children classroom context. Another study by Tinker & Papert (1989) as cited in Blumenfeld et al., (1991) has given opportunity to students to share their results with wider audiences. The study used National Geographic Society's KidsNet network to provide the

opportunity for upper elementary students to gather local data on the pH of rain water. Through the use of the network, students could discuss their findings with scientists and share their results with other students in other location.

The studies above indicate that group project provides both the context and the condition students need to interact using English confidently. Even though the study in children classroom (Tinker & Papert, 1989 as cited in Blumenfeld et al., 1991) was not done on the field of language learning, the students involved in the study were interacting using English. Brown (2001) states that as learners get absorbed in purposeful projects, both receptive and productive language is used meaningfully. Through group project, students will interact with their groupmates and teacher while making a project. Finally, they will present their project confidently in front of the audience which can be their parents, teachers, or their classmates. By doing so, students' speaking skill will also improve as they practice it gradually along the completion of project.

As indicated by the aforementioned studies, completing a project can also increase students' speaking skill. This study therefore aims at implementing Project Based Learning to increase students' interaction. This study entitled *Using Group Project to Improve Students' Interaction*, is expected to discover how group project can improve students' interaction.

B. Research Questions

This study investigates the following questions:

1. To what extent does group project improve 4A students' interaction?
2. What are the difficulties that 4A students face along the completion of group project?
3. What strategies 4A students do to overcome the difficulties?

C. Aims of Study

The aim of the study is:

1. to discover to what extent group project improves 4A students' interaction,
2. to discover the difficulties which 4A students face along the completion of group project
3. to discover the strategies 4A students do to overcome the difficulties.

D. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on to what extent group project improves 4A students' interaction, what difficulties which 4A students face along the completion of group project, and what strategies 4A students do to overcome the difficulties. This study focuses on 4A

students' interaction both with their teacher and classmates using English when they are doing their project inside the classroom. This study finds out the implementation of group project to improve 4A students' interaction.

E. Significance

This study is expected to give the description of the implementation of group project in improving 4A students' interaction. Hopefully, this study will help English teachers to be able to provide appropriate strategies to improve students' interaction.

F. Clarification of Terms

1. Group project is defined as a project which is made by group of students in form of product or presentation (Jones, Rasmussen, & Moffitt, 1997; Thomas, Mergendoller, & Michaelson, 1999 as cited in Thomas, 2000).

2. Student interaction is defined as interaction occuring between student and teacher and between student and student inside the classroom using English.

G. Paper Organization

This paper will be presented into five chapters, as follow:

CHAPTER I   : INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the paper will elaborate the background of the study. It will discuss how Indonesian students having problem in speaking English because of lack of interaction. The description of the problem will emphasize the benefits of using group project to improve students' interaction.

CHAPTER II : THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter will discuss some theories related to classroom interaction for young learners and related theories to classroom interaction, group work, and project based learning.

CHAPTER III : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will give clear discussion of how the study will be conducted and analyzed. It clarifies why the study needs to use two cycles of treatments. The data analysis also will be briefly explained.

CHAPTER IV : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study and will analyze those findings in discussion clearly. It will portray how group project improves 4A students' interaction, the difficulties which 4A students face along the completion of group project, and the strategies 4A students do to overcome the difficulties.

CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter will present the conclusion and several suggestions of the study based on the analysis in chapter four. The conclusion states the answer to the research questions about the teacher's strategy used under study employ. Several suggestions to improve teachers' strategies in improving their students' interaction will be stated.