

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter of the paper briefly describes the rationale and purpose of the undergoing research.

1.1 Background

In the era of vast information and globalization, English has been some sort of a trend and kudos amongst intellectuals and in almost every level of the society. This is caused by the inevitable requirement and development of information throughout the whole world, especially in developing Asian countries that compels the society to communicate and operate control panels, which formally applies English as the universal language. Higher education, particularly in Indonesia, has also driven students to comprehend English – based textbooks to enhance them in course work and assignments, and nowadays students are obliged to fulfill the requirements of an English proficiency test to enter and even graduate from various universities or institutes. Moreover, in international or ESL classes learners also utilize English through classroom activities, which apply all four language skills. This phenomenon has forced the public to actively seek various means to acquire these requirements, which consequently encourages English centers and institutions to enhance better and optimal English programs.

There are various methods of language teaching. The conventional method, or best known as the traditional method, focuses on teacher-centered, whereas nowadays there are many alternative ways and techniques in teaching. These breakthroughs in teaching essentially practices learner-centered approaches where learners are more involved in the process and experience of learning, especially in ELT. The materials in delivering this knowledge have been enhanced to fit the appropriate method and techniques for the learners to acquire language, therefore exposure plays an important role in language acquisition. As suggested by Cohen (1996), language learners are expected to learn how to communicate the target language in classrooms rather than learn the language through isolated words and phrases. Cohen adds that the sociocultural context of the language should also put into consideration to fully achieve the communicative objectives.

From time to time, the approaches in teaching language, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL), have altered through decades of reform to meet the best results or outputs that could be yielded from the process of teaching - learning. These so called elites of language teaching have brought a diversity of ideas to take account into English Language Teaching (ELT). For instance, behaviorists (Skinner, 1957 as cited in De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2005: 28) believe that learners can only learn something from correct and accurate examples of language, and as a result learners should imitate whatever is performed by natives or instructors. One could see that this belief neglects learner's autonomy, whereas Chomskyans (Chomsky, 1966 as cited in

De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2005: 78) considers that learners possess an abstract framework in their minds to enhance a constructive language acquisition from the various inputs learners obtain. These ideas of language acquisition have much influenced the methods and approaches of language teaching nowadays.

Krashen as cited in Harmer (2007:47) suggests that students should be concentrated on the right kind of language exposure, meaning language which more or less they understand based on experience and exposure. Students should be exposed more to the intended language in a more subconscious and anxiety free situation, where language skills are more freely expressed. In this case, language is obtained to develop the oral language, which includes listening and speaking, and written language, consisting of reading and writing. This study will focus on the process of written language acquisition, namely through writing activities.

Writing, as a productive skill, has a vital position in many aspects of our lives. People write many things in various different ways and purposes of using it, such as lab reports in science classes or in any scientific experiments. Thus the quality of written text itself has much importance as spoken language does to be spotlighted in the language classrooms, especially EFL. Its productivity ensures a better view of how language is brought to text, therefore the presentation of lab reports would be important as a writing product for the intended audience to grasp. The variation of methods brought into classrooms can also impact on the outcome. Therefore learning objectives are obliged to be in line with what is taught and how it meets the output. In

the process towards the product, writers go through the course of doing revision whether to restore mechanical, grammatical, organizational or substantial inaccuracy of the draft. In this case, writing lab reports which is intended to inform a descriptive written work on what has been done during an experimental process could also be accounted into the writing process.

Through the process of learner's development in class, many (if not most) rely on teachers as the sole source of knowledge (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Zhang, 1995 as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006:3). In the era of *learner-centered approach*, teachers have been introduced to various practice of formative assessment where collaborative learning is set up to encourage learners' autonomy, such as 'peer correction' (Lin & Chien, 2009; Sultana, 2009). To support the *cooperative learning* atmosphere, some, if not many, have practiced peer-feedback as a method to enhance student's autonomy in the learning process. As a replacement for teacher's authority in the formal accuracy and product of writing, peer review encourages the writing process approach that inspires "greater respect for individual writing and for writing itself" (Hyland, 2003: 17 as cited in Ting & Qian, 2010: 87).

In previous studies, the process of peer feedback gives opportunities for learners to engage in higher level thinking (Liu, Lin, Chiu, & Yuan, 2001). Moreover, it assists learners in their learning process by frequently applying higher order thinking skills in a community based environment. In addition, Zhang & Toker (2011) in their study states that peer review considerably influences learner's

knowledge development, and also helps develop metacognitive learning skills in the learning community. It shows that learning as a community possesses a variety of advantages towards the development of knowledge.

According to Sanjaya (2005: 118) constructivists believe that learning, or in this case language acquisition, can be achieved as of the process in constructing new knowledge (or behavior) through learner's cognitive mental state that is derived from experience. This also appeals to the fact that learner's could input (if ever becomes *intake*) a diversity of learning sources throughout school hours, or extensively outside of the formal education site, where life experience can be detained.

Moreover, constructivism is thought to be in line with the idea of learner – centered, since meaningful learning and learner autonomy is greatly encouraged thus the variety of learning outcomes becomes comprehensible. In addition, Piaget (1970) as cited in Sanjaya (2005: 118) suggests that knowledge is not only fabricated from the object, but rather from the individual's ability to grapple every observed object. In other words, constructivists consider knowledge as everything that comes from the outside but is also constructed within the individual. Therefore, Sanjaya puts forward two essential factors within this school of thought, namely the object that is being observed and the subject claiming the facility to interpret the object. This indicates that knowledge is a dynamic theory, which is dependable on the individual's capacity to construct it. Furthermore, Piaget (1970) as cited in Sanjaya (2005: 118) proposes the principles of knowledge as follows:

- a. Knowledge is not only the objects represented through the world, but also the reconstruction process done by the subject.
- b. The Subject forms cognitive, category, concept, and structure schema that are necessary to attain knowledge.
- c. Knowledge is shaped in the conceptual structure of an individual. The conceptual structure forms knowledge if the concept is taken account with one's experience.

The cognitive aspect endured through experience would claim an essential factor in reshaping knowledge of this school of thought. Exposure that is received within the experience would play a major role towards the knowledge formation, especially in the context of language acquisition where it instills the idea of the right kind of exposure. Nevertheless, the instilled cognitive device individual's possess has much to do with the creation and conceptualization of knowledge. Thus, there is a strong dependent on both factors.

In line with the study, this belief would suggest the learner – centered approach of teaching and encourage the development of learner's autonomy in constructing knowledge, where knowledge is formed through the process of exposure or input from the outside world which is then processed within the individual's cognitive state. This may take place in the process-oriented writing activity, where it undergoes pre-writing, supports peer review and involves multiple drafts (Emig, 1983 as cited in Ting & Qian, 2010: 87).

In addition, Fujieda (2007:139) claims that feedback is an essential part towards the improvement of writing, and becomes an effective tool to aid learners in

the process of the writing development. A study by Thaksanan (2007) revealed that subjects' written drafts changed to some extent and raised their awareness of a good piece of writing and language use. Furthermore, as Rollinson (2005) mentions the involvement of peers in a more supportive atmosphere is considered to be less threatening. However there are disadvantages, as Sultana (2009) shouts, where learner's self esteem and confidence might be dented and experience an embarrassing learning practice, but when students are provided with the collaborative skills to work with each other, the peer feedback session can be more effective (Murphy & Jacobs, 200).

Recently studies on feedback have shifted from the focus on learner's surface level of writing, namely accuracy, fluency of writing, and quality of texts, to an insight of feedback perception on writing such as learner's belief or behavior towards feedback (Fujieda, 2007:140). However, in the EFL context, especially in Indonesia, there has not been much studies in this area.

Based on what has been brought above, the present study would like to explore the types of written feedback, and how learners perceive and take their peer's written feedback for future writing.

1.2 Statements of Problem

In line with the argument above, the present study emphasizes on the research questions below.

1. What types of feedback are given by learners towards their peer's writing drafts?
2. What are learner's perspectives towards peer feedback?
3. How do learners take their peer's written feedbacks for future writing?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the formulated questions above, the aim of the study are as follows:

1. To discover different types of written feedback by learner's towards their peer's writing drafts.
2. To explore learner's perspectives towards the benefits and difficulties of peer feedback activity as a tool to improve their lab report.
3. To investigate how learners incorporate and respond towards their peer's written feedbacks for future writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study hopes to positively contribute to education in general, especially in the process of setting up and shaping learners writing ability. Theoretically, by identifying learner's perception towards the feedback technique, this would provide a deeper insight of how learners produce commentary feedbacks towards their peers and vice versa how they deal or incorporate those feedbacks into

their revision or future writing. Moreover, knowing learner's perspectives and obstacles can in advance influence the process of teaching and learning to apt optimal outcomes.

As a result, teachers would have an insight to an alternative way towards the writing and thinking process of their learners. Through an overview of what students find difficult and accessible to them in the process (such as the type of written feedback and how learners incorporate and respond to them for future writing), therefore finding the best or alternative method that suits their learners would be comprehensible for teachers to consider towards this model.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter briefly introduces the undergoing study in general.

Chapter 2- Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews previous theories underpinning the issue of the study.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter illustrates the process of data collection and procedures in carrying out the study.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

This chapter reveals the results of the study and the data analysis through discussions and interpretation based on the findings and established theories.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This chapter concludes on what has been achieved through the study and suggestions on future studies.

