

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of this study. The discussion begins with the background underlying this study. Statements of the problem, aims of the study, limitation of the study, significance of the study, and research method are presented next. Finally, this chapter is ended by presenting the paper organization.

1.1 Background of the Study

Since English develops as one of the foreign language subjects at schools in Indonesia, it becomes an important subject at schools. The students are expected to master English in this globalization era. It can be proved that English is taught to students of primary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools, and also students at university.

The significance of English as one of local contents at primary schools is evident in local content curriculum No. 060/U/1993 in 25 February 1993. English program is given to fourth grade to sixth grade at primary schools. On the whole, primary schools are allowed to teach English subject as local content to students since fourth grade.

Teachers used many strategies in English teaching learning activities. The strategies of teaching English to young learners are not followed by the assessment strategy in the comments of Georgiou and Pavlou (2003) as cited in Masitoh (2008). Rixon (1995) also has stated in his research that many EYL

teachers especially the new ones were unclear about the strategy of the assessment.

All of the teachers need assessments in evaluating students. As explained by Pinter (2006) and Damayanti (2008), when the teachers would like to know the effectiveness of their teaching and the progress of their students' learning in the classroom, they used assessment. Overall, assessment is one of the important parts in teaching and learning process.

Writing is one of the language skills that need to be learned by children. Writing is not an easy skill to be mastered. For most people, writing is a difficult and complex process. As outlined by Nunan (1998:86), writing is not only the action of arranging the words, but also arranging them into the well organized result.

Assessing writing to children and to adults is different in the comment of Weigle (2009:1). He states that what makes it different is that children have different characteristics from adults. It means that assessing writing to children needs certain strategies.

At present, mastery of English for educational and professional purposes increases because of the function of English as a language of world communication. The teaching and the assessment on writing are receiving more attention than ever before. From this real situation, there are found many kinds of research that are related to the assessment on writing in EYL context.

Many strategies, in assessing writing, have been conducted relating to EYL context. Research by Rixon and Rea-Dickins (1999) has showed that paper

and pencil test is mostly used by teachers to assess their students' writings. They used paper and pencil test as major tools in assessing. The significance of assessing writing to EYL was evident in the comments of O'Connor (2001) in a report. He states that it was used as a measure of technical knowledge and understanding. That was traditional paper and pencil measures. As outlined by McKay (2006), preparing young learners to take a paper and pencil test was likely to be at the spread of real experience with the language such as writing e-mails to e-pals.

A study about assessing writing in adult second language (L2) has been done. Research which was carried out in Sweden investigated the promotion of self assessment and reflection in L2 classroom. Sullivan and Lindgren (2002:258) describe, "a method is intended in which the computer is used first to record a writing session, and then later to replay the entire text production in retrospective peer sessions". The method offered the students with a chance to look into their own composing processes both linguistically and holistically. As they analyzed and discussed, this method is not limited to an L2 environment, but it is useful for the achievement process.

This study investigates the strategies that are used by teachers in assessing writing. The participants are the teachers at a primary school who teach students in the fifth grade. The second question of this study is why teachers choose the assessment strategies. And the last, it is to find the appropriate assessment for teaching program.

There are some differences between this study and previous studies. First, in this study, the participants are teachers while in the previous studies, they were students. Second, this study examines what teachers' strategies are used in assessing writing without choosing the strategies first while in the previous studies, they chose the strategies first. And the last, this study observes how the teachers assess their students while the previous studies observed how a strategy of assessing writing was applied in the class. Based on the explanation above, the writer conclusively determines to carry "*teachers' strategies in assessing writing in EYL context*" as the title of study.

1.2 Questions of the Study

There are three questions of study addressed in this paper:

1. What kinds of strategies are applied by the English teachers in assessing writing in EYL context at Elementary School in Bandung?
2. Why do teachers choose those assessment strategies?
3. To what extent is the assessment appropriate for the teaching programs?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study is aimed:

1. To discover assessment strategies that are applied by English teachers in assessing writing in EYL context at Elementary School in Bandung;
2. To reveal teachers' reasons in choosing those strategies; and
3. To know the appropriate assessment for the teaching programs.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on identifying teacher's strategies that are used to assess young learners' progress in writing at six selected elementary schools in Bandung. This study concerns with assessment strategies, reasons for choosing those assessment strategies, and the appropriate assessment for the teaching programs.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide a portrait of the assessment strategies for young learners' progress in writing at primary schools, teachers' reasons in choosing those strategies, and the appropriate assessment for the young learners. Practically, it is estimated to provide valuable information for the teachers about assessment for young learners. Hopefully, some assessment strategies revealed from this study can be applied in assessing young learner at primary school. Hence, it will give significant contribution to English teachers at primary schools in assessing young learners.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

A description about methodology which consists of study design, data collection, and data analysis is explored below.

In order to answer the research questions, this study employs a qualitative research design. As discussed by Silverman (2005:15), through qualitative research design, the researcher can get complex and also holistic picture about the

problem. The researcher has an opportunity to get clear information of the assessment strategies used by English teachers at primary schools, the teachers' reasons in choosing those strategies, and the appropriate assessment for the young learners. In qualitative research, the design allows the researcher to examine students' written texts that were produced in natural classroom activities (Sugiyono, 2007:8; Alwasilah, 2006:78; and Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:11).

Data analysis is done after all the data, which consisted of observation data, interview data, and document analysis, have been gained. In analyzing the data, the data from class observation, document analysis and interview are classified according to the research questions.

The data collected from the document analysis are also labeled. Those are analyzed descriptively. The data collected from the interview are transcribed, classified, and interpreted. The data collected from the classroom observation are transcribed, documented into observation sheets, classified, and interpreted.

This study applies the Interactive Model by Miles and Huberman (1984). There are three steps of analyzing the data. There are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction means that the researcher summarized and chose the main items to construct particular pattern. Data display is the form of graphics, tables, charts, or citation. Conclusion drawing is explaining a new finding.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized in five chapters and each chapter has subtopics which elaborate the issue given. Chapter I presents introduction. It consists of background of the study, questions of the study, aims of the study, limitation of the study, significance of the study, methodology of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper. Chapter II presents literature review. It deals with the theoretical frameworks which are relevant with the study. Chapter III is methodology of the study. It elaborates the methodology used for this study including the research design, data collection, and data analysis and the procedure of the research. Chapter IV shows findings and discussions. It presents the findings of the study and the discussions. The result answers the research questions. Chapter V presents the conclusions and suggestions derived from this study.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Some terms used in this study would be clarified in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. They include assessment, young learners, primary school, English teacher, and strategy.

As defined by Pinter (2006:131), assessment refers to the process of data analysis that teachers use to get evidence about their learners' performance and progress in learning. Assessment in this study refers to any systematic way of finding out about people's level of knowledge or skill, in this case the people are young language learners at primary school.

The writer also would like to define evaluation term to differentiate the meaning. In the explanation of Brown (2004:5), he describes that evaluation concerns systematic ways of finding out about the value and impact of processes and things such as teaching program, teaching material, etc.

Young learners in this study refer to children who are in the fifth grade of elementary school. As defined by Pinter (2006:2), young learners are children who are around five until thirteen years old. And in Indonesia, children in fifth grade are they who are around eleven to thirteen years old.

As explained by Oxford dictionary (1987:426), primary school is where primary education is given. It is the first stage of education. Primary schools in this study refer to the elementary schools which put English as one of the subjects in their curriculum.

English teachers in this study refer to those who teach English in fifth grade at elementary school. In this study, there are six teachers chosen.

As fined by Oxford dictionary (1987:552), strategy is plan of action in education, politics, or business, etc. In this study, strategy means any action plan of variety exercises, activities, or tasks used for administering the assessment in the classroom.