

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This chapter focuses on how the study was conducted. It discusses what design was employed in the study, where the study was carried out, who participated in the study, how the data were collected and then analyzed, and how to measure the validity of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative approach since it focused on the investigation of the teachers' beliefs about how children learned, particularly learning English language, and their implication on the teaching process in their classrooms. This study deals with a social phenomenon—English language teaching classroom situation, that it is appropriate to be applied in this study. Cresswell (1994:1) states that qualitative study “...is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” In line with this, Berg (2007) claims that it is a method to allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others. It appropriately is employed to discuss various social contours and processes that human beings use to create and maintain their social realities.

Specifically, a case study was used as the method of the study because it was intended to explore a phenomenon limited by time and activity. Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989) in Cresswell (1994) define a case study as exploration of a single entity or phenomenon (the “case”) bounded by time and activity, such as a program, event,

process, institution, or social group. A case study may focus on either examination to a single aspect of an individual's life or assessment to the social life of an individual and his or her behavior in society, experiences, roles, and motivations that affect his or her behavior in society (Berg, 2007). This was related to what was being investigated in the study.

### **3.2 Setting of the Study**

The study was undertaken in two public elementary schools in Bandung Kulon Subdistrict, West Java, Indonesia. These schools were selected for several reasons, beside the places where the participants of the study taught English, such as their accessibility and characteristics. The schools were cooperative in supporting the study. The headmasters, particularly, welcomed the study because they were aware of their schools' improvement in English language teaching. Thus, they made ease the investigation without troubling about the permission paper.

These schools had different features. The first school (School A) reached grade A in accreditation process based on the list from Education Office in Bandung. It means that the school is labeled as a good school. It had supportive facilities for English language class. The students studied in special rooms called language laboratory. Two rooms were set like a language laboratory—the seats were arranged in such a way that the students sat on plastic chairs facing a long desk that was divided into three chambers. A glass was installed on the front part of the desk, in order to enable the students to see the teacher through the glass. The rooms were equipped with a television set, a VCD player, a tape recorder, cassettes, cds, and books. With regard to the setting

of the rooms, the students in one grade could not be accommodated all in one session. They were divided into three groups consisting of at least 15 students each.

On the other hand, the second school (School B) was accredited in grade B. It had no specific characteristics that made it different from other public schools found in Bandung. The students studied in a room in a classical way, sitting on a chair with a desk in front of them. Each desk was shared by two students, and there were about twenty desks in the classrooms. They sat in rows, facing the teacher's desk and blackboard. Such a setting is commonly found in many public schools in Bandung.

### **3.3 Participants of the Study**

The study involved three participants from the two schools. The participants voluntarily took part in the study. Two teachers taught English at School A, and a teacher at School B. At first, there would be two teachers participating from School B; however, the second teacher got sick soon after his willingness to participate in the study.

There were no specific criteria in the selection of these teachers, but some reasons were accounted. First, they had long experiences in teaching English, described in detail below. Second, they were all voluntarily willing to take part in the study because of their awareness to the improvement of English language teaching to children in their schools. They admitted that they needed inputs to improve their teaching techniques. The following are the personal information on each participant.

#### **1. Participant 1 (P1)**

P1 was male, about 37 years old. He had an undergraduate degree on English language and pedagogy and had been teaching English to young learners for 6 years. The last

four years was the time he had spent teaching English in School A. He specialized teaching English to the students of grade 4 in the school.

## 2. Participant 2 (P2)

P2 was female, about 56 years old. She had an undergraduate degree on English language and pedagogy. She used to be an administrative employee in a government office before she was asked to teach in School A by the principal of the school. She had been teaching English to children for 3 years in School A. She taught English in grade 5 and 6.

## 3. Participant 3

P3 was female, about 41 years old. She had an undergraduate degree on French language from a school of languages in Bandung and a *strata* degree, a certificate on pedagogy, from a private university in Bandung. She had been teaching English for 20 years. However, she had spent the last three years focusing on teaching English to students School B.

### 3.4 Stages of the Study

The study started with conducting a pilot study. Its aims were to test ideas or methods and to explore their implications. Watt, Singer, and Willett (1990) in Maxwell (1996: 45) argue that *no design is ever so complete that it cannot be improved by a prior, small- scale exploratory study. Pilot studies are almost always worth the time and effort. Carry out a pilot study if any facet of your design needs clarification.*

The pilot study involved a teacher teaching English at a public elementary school in Bandung. First, she was given a set of questionnaire. After that, she was observed and interviewed. She was, then, asked whether she understood the statements

in the questionnaire and questions in the interview. The result of the pilot study was then analyzed. The questionnaire and interview guide were revised. The same procedure was carried out to another teacher in order to perfect the instrument, that is to specifically get the core of the purpose of the study. The last revised questionnaire and interview guide were then used as the main instruments in the study.

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants in a private meeting. After having their willingness to participate in the study, I visited the two schools to meet their headmasters. This was intended to win their permission to do some observations in their schools. Without any hindrance, they allowed the study to take place there.

Based on the teachers' agreement, each of them was observed four times. The first observation was carried out to familiarize myself with the field, such as with the participants, students, and classroom environment. This was also intended to establish a good relationship among I, as the researcher, and the other parties, both directly and indirectly involved in the study. This process is what is called rapport. This process was an effort to put away potential psychological barrier among the parties (Alwasilah, 2002).

The observations started in the third week of July to the second week of August in 2008. During the classroom observations, I sat at the corner of the classrooms observing the teachers and students' activities, while taking notes on the steps the teachers took and the activities the students had in the classrooms.

The interviews were carried out formally and informally. The formal interviews took place at special time since the participants had crowded schedule of teaching and other business outside the schools. On the other hand, the participants were interviewed

informally before they taught the students and after the teaching process for about 5-10 minutes.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

As mentioned earlier, this study is a qualitative research. The data were collected through triangulation strategy, that is collecting information from various individuals and using a variety of methods (Denzin in Maxwell, 1996). The methods were questionnaire, classroom observation, and interview with the teachers.

Questionnaire was distributed to the participants to collect the data. The questionnaire comprised a set of questions answered by the participants being investigated. It was intended, first of all, to gain information about their personal identity and professional development as a teacher of English in general and EYL teacher in particular, for example teaching experiences, trainings, seminars, or workshop related to EYL they attended, etc. Then, it was to search for their responses on their beliefs on how children learn, particularly learning English language, and their teaching techniques in the classrooms to help the children learn.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts of statements. The first and the second parts were about children's characteristics and children's ways of learning. Each statement was followed with a range of scale of three options: agree, uncertain, and disagree. The last part was about how they conducted their lesson in their classrooms. The statements were followed with a range of scale of five options: always, often, sometimes, seldom, and never (for a complete questionnaire see Appendix A).

The observations were conducted in English language classrooms to cross check the extent to which the teachers' options stated in the questionnaire were actually

present in their classroom practices. Observations were useful in such a way that they showed things that had become routines to the participants themselves, things which may lead to understanding the context (Merriam, 1988). I was a complete observer as I was not taking part in the conversation in the classroom.

The classroom observations focused on what the teachers said and did in the classroom. A checklist was used for the classroom observations which highlighted the following aspects:

a. The content and attitude goals:

- 1) What content is taught?
- 2) Do the teachers create a pleasing atmosphere in the classrooms?
- 3) How do the teachers use English language in the classrooms?
  - Do they use English all the time?
  - Do they translate their English into Bahasa Indonesia?
  - Do they restate the students' use of Bahasa Indonesia into English?
- 4) Do the teachers support the students to use English in the classrooms?
- 5) How do the teachers correct the students' mistakes on English language?

b. The techniques the teachers apply:

- Do they apply various activities in one meeting?
- How is each technique implemented?
- Do they involve the students in physical activities?

In order to make ease the process of observation, I made use of a video recorder. The classroom activities were shot by the help of a friend, since I was doing the note taking. It was functional to record all activities in the classroom during the lesson. As Merriam (1988) suggests that recording make the data analysis easier.

The other technique of data collection was interview. Interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person gains information from another (Merriam, 1998). The interviews were carried out to get in-depth information (Alwasilah, 2002) of the participants' opinions on what they had said and done in the classroom. All of the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder.

The interviews were in the participants' mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia), as requested by the participants. The participants were interviewed several times, formally and informally, as mentioned in the earlier section. The formal interviews were semi-structured and took place in a special occasion to obtain information about their beliefs on children (their characteristics and their ways of learning) and their teaching practices. Here are the core questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of children?
- 2) How do children learn a foreign language?
- 3) How do you use English in the classroom?
- 4) What techniques are employed in the classroom?
- 5) What steps are carried out in teaching English in the classroom?
  - Are there any routines applied in the classroom?
- 6) What do you think of Multiple Intelligences?
  - Do you consider your students' multiple intelligences in your teaching?
- 7) How do you correct the students' mistakes?

The informal interviews were carried out before and after the observations. The questions led to what the teachers were going to do in their classrooms, and what they



had done in the classrooms. This was to cross check their beliefs and their actual practices in the classrooms. The questions asked to the participants before the class started are:

1. What subject is going to be taught today?
2. What media will be used?
3. How will the subject is going to be delivered?
4. What activities are the students going to do?

And, the questions after the class are:

1. How was the teaching process just now?
2. Were you successful to carry out your lesson plan?
3. Did you meet any difficulties in teaching today? If any, what were they?
4. How were your students respond to the lesson today?

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Analysis of data in qualitative research is an ongoing process (Maxwell, 1992). Once the data were collected, they were analyzed to meet the research questions. The data analysis and interpretation were mainly based on the observations, questionnaires and interviews.

In analyzing the data, basically several cyclical phases were followed as suggested by Jackson (1989). The data were analyzed thoroughly to identify tentative theme and develop concepts on mini theories. Next, the data obtained were categorized and ordered. The last phase was assessing the trustworthiness of the data, so that there was a refinement of understanding of the matter on the study.

The videotape record and audio-taped interviews were transcribed. Then, the transcriptions were categorized and interpreted to answer the research questions dealing with the teacher and students' interaction in the English language class. Alwasilah (2002) asserted that a qualitative researcher should be consistent and constant in dealing with the study. I analyzed the data collected as soon as possible in order to avoid overloaded work to do.

### 3.7 Validity Issues

Validity is another important element in a qualitative study to prove its trustworthiness and authenticity as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Erlando, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) cited in Cresswell (1994). The data must be believed and trusted, that it needs to present insights and conclusions which are true to readers, educators, and other researchers (Merriam, 1988: 164).

The data of the study should contain internal validity. Internal validity deals with the question of how one's findings match reality and whether s/he is observing or measuring what s/he thinks s/he is observing (Merriam, 1988). It implies that in a qualitative study, there are potential threats that can lead the researcher to the wrong path. Consequently, some strategies are needed to do.

#### 3.7.1 Validity threats

The following are some examples of validity threats and the anticipation to avoid the threats:

1. How are the data collected? Merriam (1988) calls it *description*, the main threat to validity regarding what is seen and heard—inaccuracy or incompleteness of the

data. It was anticipated by making use of technology of audio and video recording of interviews and observations.

2. Are they saying the truth? Are they making beliefs their teaching practices? The participants were surely assumed to say the truth when they were interviewed and to act naturally when they were observed. However, who could guarantee that they were doing so. Anticipating this potential circumstance, the participants were convinced that, first, they would appear anonymous in the report. Second, the interviews would be kept confidential. Last, whatever they said and did were nothing wrong. The study was not intended to seek for their mistakes and weaknesses. Rather, the data would be used to portrait the beliefs that were upheld by the teachers of elementary school towards their students and their teaching process.

### **3.7.2 Validity tests**

In order to ensure the internal validity, several strategies were followed based on what listed by Maxwell (1996).

#### **1. Triangulation**

To keep the study valid, triangulation method was carried out in collecting the data (Denzin in Maxwell, 1996). This method enabled me to compare the questionnaire, observations, and interviews to be constant to one another. This method was an attempt to deal with validity threat of self-report bias in the interviews and recordings.

For the purpose of the study, other sources of data were also used, such as the teachers' books, their lesson plans (if any), media, games, etc. Several different

methods were also carried out, for example field notes, different ways of questioning regarding the same point of questions.

This study used questionnaire and observation as the main instruments. However, the data gathered from the two instruments were not enough. Therefore, interviews were also taken to validate the main instruments. The data collected from the questionnaire were only written data that could not prove anything. Though, the teachers' beliefs could be revealed through the questionnaire, they needed to be validated through observations. The first group of statements dealt with the teachers' beliefs on children characteristics and their ways of learning English. To see whether their choices were really what they believed, some observations were conducted. The observations gave more pictures of what they believed. The way they delivered the lesson and they provided the activities for their students were viewed to match up their options in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, this was not sufficient, that it needed another method to do. The participants were, then, interviewed to see their clarifications on what were chosen in the interviews and their actions in the classroom during the observations.

## 2. Feedback

It is possible that I, myself as a researcher, contributed to the validity threats through my assumptions and flaws in my logic or methods. Therefore, feedback from friends and colleagues were invited. I came to friends and colleagues who are familiar with the phenomena or setting I was studying and strangers to the issue. They gave me different ideas and comments that are valuable contribution to the study.

## 3. Member checks

Gaining feedback from the people who were under investigation was another method to avoid the threat. After analyzing the data, I called the participants again to

confirm the data I got. I wanted to keep the study away from misinterpretation of the meaning of what they said and perspective they had on the issue under investigation.

