

Chapter One

Introduction

This study is conducted to investigate students' participation in group discussions at English Language Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. This chapter discusses the background of the study, identification and limitation of the problem, the research questions, the objective of the study, significances of the study and outline of the study.

Background of the Study

Speaking is considered as the most basic skill of human communication. Brown (2004) defined speaking as a productive skill that can be directly observed; there is an activity between two or more people who are both the listeners and the speakers. Speaking is a regular activity in daily life to communicate with each other. However, it is not an easy task to master speaking in foreign language. Especially as the English Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking English is considered difficult for them to master. Tuan and Mai (2015) identified there are several problems affecting students' speaking performance such as inhibition and low level of students' participation in speaking class activities.

Students' participation is considered as an important aspect in learning process. Learning English as Foreign Language needs constant practices to master. Warayet (2011) stated that in English as foreign language context, teachers commonly motivate students to actively speak in classroom to practice and improve their speaking ability. Thus, generally, students' participation is sometimes defined as students' oral participation in learning activities. Weimer (2010) defined a successful learning as active activities that students should

involve in speaking. Hence, some teachers feel that they have successful learning activities when students actively speak. Unfortunately, most students assume that as long as they have submitted the assignment on time and the attendance is completed, they reach a high grade, they are successful in learning and participation in classroom activities is just not important (Weimer, 2010).

Although, oral participation is considered as important aspect in learning, many of EFL students hesitant to participate orally in classroom activities. Warayet (2011) assumed that the lack of English speaking ability and the influence of mother tongue might be the general factors that make students hesitant to speak English. Generally, EFL students do not have many opportunities to practice their speaking ability outside the classroom. Therefore, students' participation in classroom activities might be the biggest chance for the students to practice. Warayet added that teacher is the director of the learning activities, which means teacher, should provide the opportunities for the students to actively participate. To realize this opportunity, teacher should implement an active learning to facilitate the students' participation and increase their activeness in classroom activities.

Nowadays, teaching techniques are improving day by day. There are several new collaboration of teaching techniques develop to improve students' involvement in learning activities. Oradee (2012) stated in her study that collaborative teaching techniques such as role-play, presentation, demonstration, group discussion, information gap, jigsaw puzzle, games and writing daily journal are the example of collaborative teaching technique used in most of college classrooms to improve students' abilities. In this study, the researcher only

concerned to choose group discussion to be the focus of the research. Oradee added that as a way of collaborative learning, group discussion is useful to encourage the students to actively communicate in classroom activities.

Furthermore, Thomton (2001) believed that through group discussion, students develop cooperation between students to students and students to teacher.

Thomton also added that group discussion provides big opportunity for students to actively participate by expressing their ideas about the topic which improved their speaking ability and critical thinking. Thomton (2001) identified that students' participation in group discussion includes actively asking and giving information about the topic, accepting others' opinions and giving a problem-solving.

Unfortunately, even though teacher has implemented group discussion as collaborative learning to facilitate students' participation, there are still some students who are hesitant to actively participate.

Some studies found similar findings related to students' participation in group discussion. Peterson (2001) found that there are some students who look hesitant in expressing their ideas or comment others' opinions in group discussion. They prefer to be quiet and sit back to express ideas and opinions. In contrast, there are some students who seem to enthusiastically participate in group discussion. Even, they overly participate and dominate the discussion. Those students who are hesitant and overly active in participation have individual reasons why they do it. In another study, Turner and Patrick (2004) identified that internal and external factors might influence students' participation in group discussion. For example, students might be not interested and have lack

information about the topic. Classmates who are overly talkative and dominate the discussion might be also the factors that influence students' participation.

Based on the researcher's experience as the student of English Language Education Department (ELED) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), the students' activeness and passiveness become the problem in the implementation of group discussion at ELED of UMY. There are some students who are hesitant to actively participate and overly active in participation. Therefore, based on this problem the researcher conducted this study to assess students' participation in group discussion at ELED of UMY and investigated the factors that influence students' participation and nonparticipation.

Identification and Limitation of the Problem

Group discussion as collaborative teaching technique is usually used as the teaching technique at ELED of UMY. Group discussion provides a lot of benefits to improve students' abilities. Turner and Patrick (2004) stated that group discussion provides students' opportunities to learn and practice new knowledge, explain their opinions and examine their thinking processes and recognize the need to revise thinking.

Group discussions at ELED of UMY implemented since the very first semester until the seventh semester. Unfortunately, the researcher found that there are several problems affected the implementation of group discussion at ELED of UMY. First, the lack of students' interest of the topic becomes the problem. Usually, students will feel uninterested to discuss some problems that are too hard to understand or too hard to get the information. Besides, their role as educational

students, require them to discuss about educational issue that not all students are familiar with. The limitation of time is also the problem in group discussion. Usually, the time provided by the teacher is not enough to discuss the topic and they need extra time to discuss and make group decision. Then, another problem appear in group discussion is students' activeness and passiveness. Weimer (2010) found that there are some students who willingly become volunteers to speak and often dominate the discussions, while the others just listen. This problem is exactly the same as the researcher's experience. Some students at ELED of UMY tend to be quiet and just follow the discussion without giving arguments or ideas. On the other hand, there are some students who tend to dominate the discussion. This problem might be influenced by several factors. Turner and Patrick (2004) identified the important factors that influence students to participate include students' personal and environmental factors. Students' personal factor includes their motivation in learning while environmental factor include the problem that might be appear in group discussion.

In order to limit the problems above, the researcher concerns to assess students' participation in group discussions and investigate the general factors that influence students' participation and nonparticipation. The researcher believes that students in each batch have different level of English speaking proficiency. Here, the researcher only used the ELED of UMY students' batch 2014 in seventh semester as the participants and this study was also conducted only in Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Research Questions

In line with the problem, the researcher aims to find out:

1. How is the students' participation level in group discussions at ELED of UMY?
2. What are the factors that influence students' participation in group discussions at ELED of UMY?
3. What are the factors that influence students' nonparticipation in group discussions at ELED of UMY?

The Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study aimed to assess students' participation in group discussions. Furthermore, this study also investigated the factors that influence students' participation and nonparticipation in group discussions. This study identified the reason why the students are eager or hesitant to participate in group discussions.

Significances of the Study

The researcher believes that this study is important to conduct. This research at least can be beneficial for the participating students, the teachers and other researchers.

Firstly, this study would be beneficial for the participating students. The result of this study will show their degree of participation in group discussions. After studying the factors that influence their participation, the researcher hopes that the students will be inspired to be active in group discussions and have self-awareness to improve their participation.

Secondly, this study would be beneficial for the teachers. The researcher hopes that the result of this study will be useful to give the teacher consideration to improve a better group discussion implementation in order to increase students' participation.

Lastly, the researcher believes that this study would be beneficial for the others researchers. This study would be a reference for the further research concerning the students' participation.

Outline of the Study

The chapters of this study are organized as follows. Chapter one is an introduction. This chapter explained why the researcher concern to study the problem. It discussed background of the study, the identification and limitation of the problem, the research questions, the objective of the study, the significances of the study and outline of the study.

Chapter two is a literature review. This chapter reviewed some theories related to students' participation in group discussion; factors influencing students' participation and nonparticipation, definition of group discussion, advantages of group discussion, and common problems in group discussion. The researcher also provided the review of related previous study and conceptual framework as the support literature.

Chapter three is research methodology. In this chapter, the researcher explained how this study was conducted. This chapter discussed the research design, the research setting, the research population and sample, the instrument of the study, the technique of data analysis, and analysis the data.

Chapter four is results and discussion. The researcher provided the numerical data of the SPSS as the results of the study and explained the results more in depth in the discussion section.

Chapter five is conclusion and recommendation. In this chapter, the researcher summarized the study based on the research results. The researcher also gave the recommendations for the students, teachers and other researchers.