

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the introduction of the research. The introduction includes background of the study, the statement and limitation of the problem, and the research questions. Additionally, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the outline of the study are also presented in the chapter.

Background of the Study

One of the most important elements in teaching English is assessment. Assessment is important to measure the students' knowledge about the materials which have been taught by the teachers. Shaaban (2001) argued that by giving an assessment to the students, the teachers can make a decision about the students' knowledge and achievement of the subject. Mussawy (2009) said that assessment is essential in learning and it relates to the teacher's instruction methods and the students' learning outcomes. An assessment does more than just helping teachers know about the students' progress in the learning process, but an assessment is helping teacher to develop the learning process. Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnston and Rees (2012) emphasized that the aim of an assessment is to inform teacher about students learning, development of learning, teachers' quality on teaching, and the quality of the program used. Therefore, through assessment, the teachers can find out the students' knowledge, achievement, and how to improve their quality of teaching.

There are many forms of assessment. According to Brown (2003), the forms of assessment to assess students' knowledge are open ended, close-ended, multiple choice question, role play, matching, storytelling, short answer, picture cued, and reordering words. Dikli (2003) also mentioned that the forms of assessment include true or false test, multiple choice test, essays, short answer test, portfolios, and project. Consequently, the teachers should be aware of the function of each form of assessment so that the teachers can get more information of the students' knowledge which is required.

Generally, there are two types of assessments which are formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is an assessment which shows the students' knowledge in a given time. Boston (2002) mentioned that the purpose of formative assessment is to measure the students' knowledge in order to make changes in the teaching and learning process. Summative assessment is an assessment that shows the students' knowledge based on what they have learned, and it is usually conducted at the end of the course. Brown (2003) concluded that summative assessment is done at the end of the course to measure the students' overall knowledge. Formative and summative assessment are used to measure students' knowledge in different time.

Essay can be used for both formative and summative assessment. This is also often used by the teachers. Using an essay as formative or summative is based on the purpose of assessment. Spiller (2011) stated that essay is a flexible tool of assessment to measure the students' knowledge. Dikli (2003) remarked that essay-based

assignments have flexible questions and they can assess students' learning in higher skill. The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2002) defined essay as "students' writing task about topic that has been developed" (p. 240). In conclusion, essay is an assessment of the students' writing which is used by the teachers to examine the students' knowledge.

Based on the researcher's experience as a student at English Language Education Department of one Private University in Yogyakarta, one forms of assessment which is often used is essay. Essay is a written form of assessment in which the students are asked to write an academic writing about a certain topic or case. Essay is usually done in the middle or in the end of semester. Essay is used in most of the course, especially for courses regarding to theories. Essay is used in all courses, especially for courses regarding theories and language skills. Some of the courses which use essay-based assessment as an assessment are Principles of Teaching and Learning course, Language Assessment and Evaluation course, Education and Teaching Practices course, Curriculum Design course, Material Design course, and Teaching English as Foreign Language course.

The researcher is curious to find out about the benefits, problems and the use of essay as an assessment tool to evaluate learning process based on the students' perception. There are only few research about essay as assessment at English Language Education of one Private University in Yogyakarta. This research can help the students to know what the benefits and problems of essay are. To investigate this topic comprehensively, the researcher carried out a research entitled "English

Language Education Department Students' Perception on the Use of an Essay-based Assessment".

The Statement and Limitation of the Problem

There are multiple forms of assessment that are applied to the students because assessment is important to determine the success of learning. The forms of assessment include role play, multiple choice questions, fill in blank, essays, true or false, and open-close ended question. One of the ways to assess the students is by applying writing assessments. One of the writing assessments applied at English Language Education Department of one Private University in Yogyakarta is essay.

Essay is rarely researched at English Language Education, despite it being the most used assessment in some courses. Essay has some benefits for the students, such as improving the students' understanding of the material, strengthening the students' memories, and improving the students' writing skills.

Essay is an individual assessment which is often used by the lecturers to assess students' knowledge. It means that the students are asked to explain, to describe, and to give reason using their own words. Therefore, the teachers give great score for essay. However, based on the researcher experience, essay needs a lot of time to make, because the students can add references from books or journal. Sometimes, the students need to interview a willing participant in order to get more information. It makes some students dislike making essay. When the teachers asked the students to make essay, they told about the material taught by the teachers.

Specifically, the focus of this study is essay as an assessment. The researcher examines students' perception on the essay as assessment in relation with their understanding to the whole materials. Specifically, the researcher explores the benefits, problems, and the use of essay as an assessment tool to evaluate learning process based on the students' perception.

The Research Questions

The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the students' perception on essay as a tool to assess their learning process?
2. What is the students' perception on the benefits of essay as an assessment tool?
3. What is the students' perception on the problems that they face when doing essay as assessment?

The Objectives of the Study

The purposes of the research are:

1. To find out the students' perception on essay as a tool to assess their learning process.
2. To find out the students' perception on the benefits of essay as an assessment tool.
3. To find out the students' perception on the problems that they face when doing essay as the assessment tool.

The Significance of the study

This research is expected to provide many benefits especially to the teachers and the students at English Language Education Department of one Private University in Yogyakarta. The significance of the study are explained as follows :

The students. This research provides information about the perception of students on essay as assessment in learning process. After reading this study, the students are expected to know the benefits and problems of essay. If the students know the benefits of essay, they can make a good essay. If the students are aware of the problems of essay, they are expected to minimize the problems.

The lecturers. After reading this research, the lecturers are able to consider the use of essay as assessment as one of the assessment process in their future courses. If the lecturers know the students' perception on essay as assessment, it will help them to make consideration whether or not they use essay or designing essay, so that the problems slightly appear.

The other researchers. This research can be a reference for the other researchers who have an interest in researching the topic of essay. The researchers can search new invention or fact of essay. They can improve the result of this research.