

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the problem identification, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Assessment is inseparable from the process of learning. Masters (2013) and James (2014) asserted that a well-developed assessment carries a huge positive contribution for the students, teachers, government, and society. Assessment is believed to be valuable for higher education students to attain maximum educational experiences (Falchikov, 2013, p. ix). The statement has been proven by Boud & Falchikov (2007), Biggs & Tang (2011), and Biggs (2014) who had discovered that students' learning is hugely affected by the achievement through assessment rather than teachers' instructions. It is also stated that assessments in higher education hold the power to build up students' confidence in their learning and evaluating skills, which are used even after they have graduated to set up a successful career (Brown & Glasner, 1999, p. 159). Assessment is also beneficial for the teachers. Quality assessments are followed by feedback that is comprehensible for students, hence giving unreliable feedback will only waste teachers' time and energy (Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp, Brinke, & Kester, 2017, p. 94). Not only that, assessments that are corresponding in terms of the capability of the graduates with the educational standards can illustrate the integrity of an institution (Havnes, 2004; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Shrum & Glisan, 2010; Boud & Falchikov, 2007). Furthermore, assessments function as suitable, accurate, and credible evidence of students' achievements (Gerritsen-van Leeuwenkamp, Brinke, & Kester, 2017, p. 95). The false evidences can cause the dissatisfaction of stakeholders, because of the mismatch between their expectations and the graduates' real abilities.

Quality assessment is an assessment that bases its practices on the principles of assessments. Brown & Abeywickrama in Tosuncuoglu (2018, p. 165) and Fizya (2018, p. 264) claimed that a quality assessment is practical, reliable, valid, authentic, and monitored until its washback. Practical assessments consider the money and effort spent, time taken to complete, administrative-wise clarity, and their human and material resources availability. A valid assessment measures the competencies that are relevant to the intended objectives only, is based on credible theories and prioritizes the measurement of students' performances which leads to the accurate illustration of what students can do. Authentic assessments involve the use of language that is as close as possible with the real-life situations, prioritize contextualized vocabularies rather than isolated items, include the usage of interesting, relevant, and meaningful themes through realistic tasks, and make the task items thematically organized, as an example utilizing news texts and articles. Lastly, the students' preparation time, positive influences in the teaching and learning processes, the provision of constructive feedback, as well as prioritization of formative rather than summative setting should be taken into account in the washback (Tosuncuoglu, 2018, pp. 165-166).

An assessment's quality can be foreseen through students' perceptions. Perception, also mentioned as veridical perceptual-experience, refers to the view established from a build-up of perceptual-cognitive processes derived from the experiences in our environment (Allen, 2019, p. 1). In education, students' perception is believed to be a reliable source to improve quality development (Wallace, Kecley, & Ruzek, 2016, p. 2). The reason is students directly participate in teaching and learning activities. Similar to Wallace's statements, Scherer, Nilse, and Jansen (2016, p. 6) asserted that students' perception in teaching and learning processes "*are among the most important criteria for evaluating teaching effectiveness*".

From the explanation above, the writer is able to conclude that well-developed assessments have the ability to carry massive benefits for students, teachers, institutions, and stakeholders (Falchikov, 2013; Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Biggs J. , 2014; Brown & Glasner, 1999; Gerritsen-

van Leeuwenkamp, Brinke, & Kester, 2017; Havnes, 2004). The practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback illustrate the quality of assessments. The quality in question can be foreseen through students' perception, as students directly participate in teaching and learning activities (Wallace, Keeley, & Ruzek, 2016; Scherer, Nilsen, & Jansen, 2016). Therefore, the students' perceptions on assessment tasks can provide insights about students' needs to be considered by curriculum developers and teachers in higher educational institutions.

1.2 Problem Identification

This research is conducted in English Language Education Study Programme (ELE-SP), one of the nationally well-known study programme of Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) that prepares its undergraduates to be competent English Language educators. The program has the vision of being prominent in the English Language education discipline, as well as pushing Indonesian people forward under the Pancasila principles in the globalization era.

Phonetics and Phonology (PP) is a three SKS key course that aims to develop an appropriate English pronunciation by exploring the production and structure of English phonemes. It discusses both segmental phonemes (vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs, consonants, and consonant clusters) as well as suprasegmental phonemes (pitch, juncture, stress, and intonation). By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to evaluate their knowledge and understanding of the English phonetics and phonology that is reflected by speaking meaningfully, as well as to review and employ researches in the field of English phonetics and phonology.

In Morphology and Syntax (MS), after the students have accomplished the course, they are expected to possess the ability to analyze the internal structure and word order of English words in the form of phrases as well as clauses. The three SKS key course employed written assessment tasks in the form of quizzes, project reports and papers, also mid and final tests. The

prerequisite of attending this course is the attendees should have accomplished the English Phonetics and Phonology course.

The conduct of the courses in ELE-SP is one of the ways to channel the program's vision has been established. PP and MS are some of the key courses administered in the programme, meaning that ELE-SP students are obliged to attend the courses. Considering the importance of the courses to ELE-SP students, the researcher would like to know how the assessment tasks in the respective courses are perceived.

In conclusion, the writer can say that the conduct of this research is beneficial, as (1) this study is able to provide insights into students' perception of assessment tasks in PP and MS, which can further help the teachers and curriculum developers to even better understand the students' needs; and (2) this research studies students' perceptions on assessment practices conducted in obliged courses (PP and MS), meaning that students cannot graduate without successfully attending the courses—increasing the urgency of conducting the study. For that reason, it is expected that this study provide insights into students' perception of the assessment tasks conducted in PP and MS that are advantageous for the curriculum and educational quality development in ELE-SP UNJ, even further in Indonesia.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question of this study would be as follows:

1. *How do students perceive assessment tasks (ATs) in Phonetics and Phonology (PP) and Morphology and Syntax (MS) courses?*

Three sub-research questions are formed, which are:

- 1.1 To what extent ATs present congruence with planned learning?
- 1.2 To what extent ATs provide student consultation?
- 1.3 To what extent ATs display transparency?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to obtain the information of the students' perceptions of assessment tasks (ATs) in Phonetics and Phonology (PP) and Morphology

and Syntax (MS) courses. The respective perceptions rotate around the assessment tasks' congruence with planned learning, student consultation, and transparency.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the students' perception regarding ATs in Phonetics and Phonology (PP) and Morphology and Syntax (MS) courses. The ATs in question refer to the conducted summative assignment tasks in which the results are graded and included in students' final scores. The ATs' details are obtained from the official RPS (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester) published by English Language Education Study Programme (ELE-SP) UNJ and confirmed to be received by the courses' attendees.

The students' perception is obtained from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which are designed based on the research question in this study. The involved participants are the students of ELE-SP UNJ of batch 2019 who have accomplished the obligatory linguistic course units explored in this study—PP and MS.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is beneficial as:

1. An additional reference for the future researchers that study the similar discipline;
2. An input for the curriculum developers for a further quality improvement of the assessment tasks employed in ELE-SP. This quality development can further benefit the students, teachers, institution, and stakeholders;
3. An insight to the teachers and student teachers to even better utilize assessment tasks in their teaching-planning and practices.