CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The study was carried out as a part of curriculum evaluation, in which Hunkins and Ornstein (1998, p. 322) stated that "… evaluation is a process or group of processes by which educators gather data to make decision, in which part the function is to collect relevant information." Exploring the instructions that are provided can reveal learning experiences the students obtain in the course, in which are building the curriculum itself (Willis and Marsh, 2007, p. 15). Learning experiences are the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, or skills through the students' own perception and participation that represent the way in which students learn the lesson to achieve the learning objectives that have been set (Sowell, 1996, p. 197). Since instructions do express the interactions between the lecturer and the students which have been designed to achieve the goals of learning, collecting information on how the ELTM 2 students perform the program designed in the course (as demanded by the instructions) is needed for the purpose of English Department Curriculum data. Whether the learning experiences will foster the total development of students in cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social and spiritual domains or not has become the criteria of validity for learning experiences selection in developing a course program (Hunkins and Ornstein, 1998, p.218).

Therefore, this study was aimed at portraying, describing, and analyzing instructions that are given to students in English Language Teaching Methodology

2 (ELTM 2) course at State University of Jakarta. This course was selected because ELTM 2 course is the last pedagogic course that ELESP students receive before they are sent to schools for practical teaching (PKM) and ELTM 2 course also requires its students to have had accomplished all the prerequisite pedagogical courses such as Language Learning Theories, ELTM 1, Curriculum and Materials Development, and Classroom Based Assessment. Information about instructions provided in this course can represent the way in which students are prepared to be competent English teacher and revealing students' responses to the instructions can reflect the effectiveness of those preceding courses as well.

From classroom observation in three ELTM 2 course classes and document analysis on its study guide (SPTLA) and its students' portfolio contents, lecturers' instructions provided for each learning activity and task were categorized and were further analyzed by using the revised Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwol, 2001). The instructions were analyzed from the perspectives of the levels of thinking that have been stimulated in order to adopt Vygotsky's view that instructions "can precede and lead to students' cognitive development" (in Gredler, 2009, p. 327) and that cognitive development, or as known as the rise in capability to perform more complex thinking skills (Schacter, 2009, p. 6), can be achieved through "extensive experience and practice" (Fischer et al., 2003, p. 40) which can realized by the means of teacher's instructions. Sample of students' performances and portfolio contents as the responses to the instructions were also examined by using the same framework to get the evidence if students' cognitive abilities are indeed promoted by the given instructions. Analyzing what the students are

carrying out and matching it with verbs stated in Bloom's taxonomy can represent the levels of thinking that students perform as Ormrod (2012, p. 153) claimed that "observing people's responses to various stimulus conditions can draw reasonable inferences about the internal mental processes that underlie those responses, including learning processes involved in learning."

Instructions can facilitate students' thinking in two major ways. According to Childs and Ryan (2013, p. 1), teacher's instructions can signify the thinking level demanded in a learning activity or task and clarify what it is that students are supposed to do in completing the task. This highlights the role of instructions in setting and maintaining the "cognitive demand" of a learning activity or task (Henningsen & Stein, 1997; Doyle, 1983) and in providing direction and guidance for students in fulfilling the demand (Huiit, 2003; Ur, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers' instructions need to be carefully prepared and clearly articulated so that students can be aware of what is expected from them. Simultaneously, the instructions also need to guide students in meeting the expectations as ZPD theory from Vygotsky (1978, p. 85) claimed that teacher's guidance as such can reduce the distance between what students can accomplish independently and their potential accomplishment under guided problem solving to achieve the optimum development in their learning.

A number of studies have been carried out in exploring teacher's provision of instructions in the classroom. A case study from Susanna Latham Benko (2012) revealed a pre-service teacher's failure in engaging students' higher level of thinking through instructions. Her classroom observations results unfolded that

during a lesson of exploring poems, the teacher maintained the "theme" to be defined at surface level. All of the students' answers either they are related to life lesson or general themes like family and nature are added to the list without having students to elaborate their reasons as to why they provide such answers. This situation leads to students' unclearness about what exactly a theme is since the teacher seemed to agree about most of their varied answers. Had the teacher's instructions been explicit and specific in guiding students to interpret the poem to decide its theme, the students would be facilitated to construct their understanding better. Consequently, the cognitive work of the activity could be extended to students interpreting and explaining reason rather than simply mentioning the theme. This proves the capability of instructions in extending the thinking level demanded in a learning task or an activity.

Another case study by Monte-Sano (2008) highlighted the importance of teacher's instructions in guiding students to complete *cognitively demanding* learning tasks. The researcher compared the writing instructions of two History teachers through observations, interview, and pre and post-test giving out. The post-test results revealed that students whose teacher used "more research-based instructional strategies that include modeling, explicit instruction, coaching, and written feedback" outperformed the others whose teacher only provided some prompts such as asking students to analyze and discuss without guiding them to respond to such prompts. This result implied that providing clear and guiding instructions are needed as it can lead to students' better learning results. It is also concluded that "students cannot be left alone to analyze – teachers provide

instruction to help students understand what it means to analyze and to help them begin to do this work" (in Benko, 2012, p. 43).

Evidences show that studies which give in-depth understanding about instructions and its relation with students' gains in learning as Benko's and Monte-Sano's are rarely found in Indonesian context. Most studies are commonly conducted by using discourse analysis to find out its types, forms, and frequency during classroom interaction (Suparno, 2013; Purnamasari et al., 2013; Syarifah Eva, 2012; Mustikasari, 2011). Even though a discourse analysis from Arum Sekar Jannati (2013) has touched on teacher's instructions and students' higher level of thinking, it only focused on exploring the variations of teacher's instructions and analyzing the level of thinking activated based on the used key verbs. The study does not provide the evidences if students' cognitive are indeed promoted after following the instructions.

In line with those situations, studies on instructions that focus more on describing *what* the instructions are and what influence they have on students' performances are therefore be worth to be conducted. Intensive investigation beyond types and frequencies can provide more complete information about the way in which instructions can lead to students' cognitive development. It will be beneficial for teachers and lecturers since Indonesian students both at school and college level are still reported to have unsatisfying cognitive performance (Indriani et al., 2014; Pratiwi & Sulur, 2011) and most instructors are still found unable to stimulate students' higher order thinking through their use of teacher talks (Jannati, 2013; Rosaningpekerti, 2013; Alam, 2012).

Therefore, based on the justification above this descriptive qualitative study focused on answering these following questions:

1.2 Research Question

1. What instructions are given to the students in ELTM 2 course?
2. What levels of thinking are stimulated in the instructions?
3. Is there any cognitive development as the result of the given instructions?

1.3 The purpose of the study

The study aimed at portraying how lecturer's instructions guide the students in carrying out learning activities and tasks in ELTM 2 course by describing what the provided instructions are, analyzing the thinking skills stimulated by those instructions, and revealing the evidences of learning experiences stimulated by the instructions especially the ones related with the students' cognitive development.

1.4 Scope of the study

The focus of this study was portraying, describing, and analyzing instructions which represent their two basic functions which are indicating what the students are expected to do and clarifying how to meet the expectations. The analysis on learning experiences directed by the instructions would be limited on those representing development of the students' cognitive domain.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study will be useful for (1) ELESP lecturers as the course program developers and implementers, (2) ELESP as the institution where the course programs are implemented, (3) ELTM 2 course takers and (4) the researcher herself.

For the ELESP lecturers, it can give empirical data on how instructions should be provided to promote and optimize students' learning. The data can also become as a means for reflecting their instructional practices to be considered in refining the program development. For ELTM 2 course takers, the research data and findings can lead them to gain knowledge about planning and using instructions that would be needed for their future teaching skills. For the researcher, conducting a deep classroom observation for three classes in the whole semester can give a clear picture on instructional practices that can sharpen her ideas on teaching and learning, as well as enable her to have hands-on experience about effective instructions. This will be beneficial as Calderhead & Robson (1991) stated that teachers will consider "good practices" as those which they have experienced themselves.