CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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

1.1. Background of the study

Assessment is one of the important part in teaching and learning process. It is an ongoing process that assesses students' proficiency by seeing students' activities in the class using the target language (Brown, 2004). The learning process which can be assessed like the students respond to a question, offer a comment, make oral presentation, and other activities that require students to experiment with the target language.

Since assessment influences learning, teachers should be able to design the assessment in order to make students achieve the standard or the goal of the course. According to Biggs (2003), teachers have to tell students the objectives of the course in terms of what teachers want students to do. Teachers should require them to perform their understanding, not only just tell about it. Biggs (2003) also added that assessment tells teachers how well each individual student's assessed performances match what is required, because this is the aim of all teaching. It requires teachers to state desired outcomes in the form of standards or criteria that

students are to attain. How well they attain them, minimally or beyond reasonable expectations.

One of cumpulsory course in English Language Education Study Program (ELE-SP) UNJ is English in Academic Discourse (EAD) course. As stated in the course's RPKPS

> "This course develops students' competence in presenting reports of research studies, both in spoken and written English, in a manner that respects existing academic traditions. Topics includes presenting (a) Introduction, (b) Literature Review, (c) Methodology, (d) Findings and Discussions, (e) Conclusion and Recommendations sections and (f) Summary or Abstract of academic works."

Masters (2013, p. 27) stated that governments and education systems have placed a high priority in developing skills and attributes necessary to face 21st century. A core function of higher education is developing human potential (Ramsden, 2003; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Masters, 2013). Higher education should provide quality learning experience that relevant to the needs of accountability across levels from institutional to departmental, program, course, to the units. Higher education also should prepare accountable and competitive human resources to face emerging global challenges. As stated in ACT No. 12 of 2012, Art. 18(2), higher education should prepare the students to face the real world where the students have to get a job or create a job as well as developing theirselves to be professional.

In order to develop human potential to be professional, higher education should have an effective education system. In an effective education system, all elements work to foster the goal of meaningful learning. When there is consistency between what teachers want students to learn, how they teach, and

how they assess students' academic performance, teaching will be much more productive than when there is the lack of alignment (Shuell, 1986 as cited in Kabouha & Elyas (2015)).

Constructive alignment theory (Biggs, 1996), by and large, is "*one of the most influential ideas in higher education*" (Biggs & Tang, 2007 p.11). The basic principle of constructive alignment is that the curriculum should be designed in a way that the learning activities and assessment tasks are aligned with the learning outcomes that are intended in the course of study (Biggs, 2003). It has been argued that using such alignment in English as a foreign language (hereafter EFL) programs would help language educators to "*get students actively involved and assess them in ways that enhance the quality of learning*" (White, 2012, p.25 as cited in Kabouha & Elyas (2015)). Biggs (1996, as cited in Mahboob (2008)) also argued that the best achievement of learning is if there is a constructive alignment between the learning goals, teaching approaches, and assessment techniques. Each of these should relate to the other.

Furthermore, the Times Higher Education rated no Indonesian institutions among its top 400 global universities or top 100 Asian universities in 2013. Likewise, the Shanghai Jiao Tong Ranking reported no Indonesian universities among its global top 500. Indonesia also finished bottom out of 50 countries in the 2013 edition of the Universitas 21 ranking. Moreover, foreign universities began to intoduce their institutions with their best facilities, benefits, and even scholarships to the Indonesian students (Kompas, 2011). Therefore, Indonesia should improve the quality of the education system to be able to compete with

foreign institutions and produce graduates that can face the 21st century. The improvement can be started with one of the important parts in teaching and learning process which is assessment that should be in alignment with the learning outcomes.

Relevant study has been conducted by Kabouha, R. & Elyas, T. in 2015. This research paper discussed the concept of constructive alignment theory (Biggs, 1996) with the learning outcomes in teaching of English at King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia. As a result, students should be made aware of the correlation of intended learning outcomes, assessment practices, and teaching methods, so that they achieve the best possible progression and results. Then, the delivery of the content and whatever the educator assesses is thus guided by the assessment standards. It is also advisable that instructors continuously reflect on their teaching practices because this will lead to quality learning and teaching, as well as, professional growth.

Moreover, Ahmar Mahboob (2008) conducted a research about assessment in higher education: A case study of one course in Australia. Results of the study showed that the coordinator had planned the unit aims to be aligned with the assessment because all the assessment tasks are in alignment with the unit aims. It was also noted that, in most cases, the students found the assessment helpful in achieving their learning goals.

Another research that related to this study has been conducted by Fitzpatrick et al. in 2015 about Alignment of Learning Objectives and

Assessments in Therapeutics Courses to Foster Higher-Order Thinking. As a result, the alignment for content and cognitive processes was not satisfactory. However, overall categorical concurrence was not acceptable in that 50% of the assessment tasks were not matched to the course objectives. These assessment tasks were related to Care Provider and Scholar ideas, but they did not correlate with objectives in the course syllabus. Moreover, it was found that more than half of the objectives met the higher-order thinking level, but less than half of the assessment tasks required higher-order thinking.

From the explanation, it can be considered that there are needs for further discussion on the alignment between assessment task with the intended learning outcomes. To be specific, the needs for these studies in the field assessment practices are still very few. learning. Not all lecturers have opportunities to think differently or deeply about the potential of assessment to contribute meaningfully to students' learning on their courses and beyond their courses (Clarence et al, 2015).

1.2. Problem Identification

English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) is S-1 English Language Teacher Preparation Program (Pre-service/PRESET) that has been acredited "B" in 2010 and also well-acknowledged at national level. ELESP has strong demands for strengthening own institutional accountability to promote greater competitiveness in this 21 century.

One of compulsory course of ELESP is English in Academic Discourse (EAD) course. This course develops students' competence in presenting reports of research studies, both in spoken and written English, in a manner that respects existing academic traditions. Topics includes presenting (a) Introduction, (b) Literature Review, (c) Methodology, (d) Findings and Discussions, (e) Conclusion and Recommendations sections and (f) Summary or Abstract of academic works. Prerequisite of taking this course is students have passed English in Business Discourse course.

However, prior study revealed that very little attention is given to conduct empirical studies on teaching and learning process in Indonesian higher education institutions despite the needs for immediate improvements in the quality of higher education instructional services (OECD/ADB, 2015). Thus, based on the explanation above, it is necessary look deeper the assessment practices employed in EAD course since EAD course is one of compulsory courses in ELESP UNJ and there are still very few for these field of assessment practices and not all lecturers have opportunities to think differently or deeply about the potential of assessment to contribute meaningfully to students' learning on their courses and beyond their courses (Clarence et al, 2015).

The writer wants to know the assessment practices employed, whether the assessments are in alignment to the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) or not, and how it supports students to achieve the intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Additionally, knowing the alignment of assessment practices with the intended learning outcomes can help the ELESP lecturers find the effective education

system which is the alignment of the assessment practices to the intended learning outcomes and promote greater competitiveness in this 21 century.

1.3. Research Question

Based on the background of the study stated above, the writer formulates the research question as follows:

1. To what extent are the assessment practices in EAD course in alignment with the course's intended learning outcomes (ILOs)?

The question is broken down further into four sub-research questions:

a. What are the intended learning outcomes of the EAD course?

b. What assessment tasks are used to assess students' achievement of the ILOs?

c. How can alignment between the course's ILOs and assessment tasks be described?

d. How are these assessment tasks support students' achievements of the ILOs?

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study aims at obtaining information on how intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and assessment tasks (ATs) of EAD course are aligned and how the assessment tasks support students' successful achievement of the ILOs by investigating the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and the assessment practices employed in English in Academic Discourse (EAD) course.

1.5. Scope of the Study

In this study, the writer concentrates on how the assessment practices employed in English in Academic Discourse (EAD) course of ELESP Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Specifically, the writer focuses on the alignment of the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) with the assessment tasks (ATs) and how the assessment tasks (ATs) support students in achieving the intended leaning outcomes (ILOs). This research focuses on exploring the documents of the course which are RPKPS, students' study materials, and students' worksheets. However, this research also conducts interview only to get the supporting data.

1.6. Significance of the study

It is expected that the result of this study can give a beneficial input for English Language and Education Study Program of UNJ in order to achieve the effective teaching and learning that supports students' successful achievement of the ILOs. Besides, hopefully this study can give input and feedback for the lecturers to be more aware with the alignment of the assessment task (ATs), intended learning outcomes (ILOs), and teaching and learning activities (TLAs) when designing RPKPS/lesson plans or syllabus and also can promote greater competitiveness in this 21 century. Furthermore, it can be used as useful source for other researchers who interested in the same field.