CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers background of the study, statement of the research problem, objective of the research, significance of the research, scope and delimitation of the research and definition of key term.

A. Context of the Study

Nowadays English has been used as a means of international interaction among people all over the world. The widely use of English requires people to equip themselves with sufficient proficiency in English. Having sufficient proficiency in English is, in fact, beneficial for the language users not only in educational field but also in job sector. In the context of education the teaching of English is directed to facilitate the students to master four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The success of EFL instructions is in general indicated by the students' ability to perform English skills satisfactorily. There are some factors affecting the attainment of English proficiency. In fact, teachers, school policies, learning materials, students' learning strategies and also learning environments are factors that are contribute to support students' learning.

In improving students' foreign language skills, schools have high authority to shape their students' abilities through school policy. In the higher level, government has a big role in making policy that is usually adopted by schools. Menken & Gracía in Gracía & Wiley (2016) stated that the context of school language policies, at the level of implementation, teachers, parents, and the

students themselves help to determine the effectiveness of policies in practice. According to Hammond (2000) the selection of teacher qualifications as outlined in school policies is an important key in developing students' foreign language skills. This is because of teacher major in the field and certification are considered as a prediction of student achievement. Meanwhile, Lauder (2008) asserts that policy should be sensitive to the actual situation and act wisely in the best interests of the country. Some school do improvement in foreign language curriculum such as giving more practical activity as like language environment. Some national plus schools such as British Jakarta School, Mawar Sharon Christian School in Surabaya, Charis National Academy in Malang and Noble National Academy in Tulungagung do improvement in English curriculum by adopting Cambridge curriculum. This is a small path to give young generation language skills.

Teachers, in its practice, are important figures in designing, conducting teaching learning process and assessing students' learning outcomes. Teachers are the ones who understand the best method to teach students since every student has different way to understand learning materials. Some of roles where a teacher performs when teaching the students are as learner, facilitator, assessor, manager and evaluator. Hammond (2000) asserted that well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background and minority status. There are so many roles of the teacher in the class to be a source and facilitator for teaching students. In fact, the teacher encountered several problems in providing material in class. As stated by Copland *et,.al.* (2013) that motivation, class size and differentiation

are a challenge for teachers. Lie (2007) suggested that teachers should improve the quality of their teaching related to the increasing needs of students in English. Therefore, teachers should enhance their knowledge base and mastery of various teaching methodologies.

The success of students in understanding foreign languages is inseparable from the learning methods they use. Krashen (1987) asserts that the best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. Furthermore, Brown (2001) establishes a three steps process that begins with a diagnosis phase such as entering a program, letting to know which are student's needs before applying a specific method, then teachers will know what treatment should be offered. Suriyanti & Yaacob (2016); Mistar *et,.al.*(2016); Manurung (2015) investigated some methodologies that could support and maximize students' learning process. It is clearly stated that methodology needs some preparation and evaluation in its use. Learning methods continue to develop along with the times and the development of students' mindset so that research on learning methodology continues to be done.

The other factors affecting the attainment of English proficiency is learning materials that are offered by schools and its curriculum. The curriculum in Indonesia is limited by the national curriculum. But this does not mean that schools cannot provide modifications related to the curriculum. Some schools use English as their first language in the school environment as the modification in giving learning materials to the students. They believe that learning by doing is more effective rather than teaching learning process in the classroom.

The quality of learning environment is a crucial factor in students' English proficiency. Some investigation about how a class environment affected students' English achievement and found that students who learn in more comfortable environments scored higher than uncomfortable schools under relatively poor classroom environments (Kausar, Sulani and Sulaeman, 2017; Lodhi, Sahar, Qayyum, Iqbal and Shareef 2019). Moreover, Umar (2017) did research toward government school in Pakistan and found that a high relationship between school environment and students' language learning. The data was taken from some factors such as classroom activity, parents' involvement, school policy and students' participation. The researcher highlights the result of students' participation and it found that students follow school's program and do not have their own independent program. Some research have been developing in e-learning environment or virtual environment to seek distance learning with optimal results. Various methods are used such as illustration, animation, application and social media (Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012; Bellemare et., al., 2013; Isa, Suhaimi, Noroding, Othman, 2019).

Students and their communities outside of school, friends, family and what they can watch, are important factors to support the students' effort in learning and maintaining their English. Some students have their own way to develop their language. Many facilities that they can find such as books, films, comics and games. They can independently develop their language. Some previous studies studied about how independent learning affect students' English skills. Kulsum, Kustono, and Purnomo (2017) examined the correlation between students' independent learning and their learning outcome toward vocational school

students and found that the students who did independent learning had higher learning outcome than the students who did not do independent learning. Furthermore, Nalatambi, Shahudin and Zaludin (2015) did the research toward junior high students and found the same result that learning environment gave a good impact in students' learning outcome. Other research were done by Herlianti, Linuwih, Dwijananti (2015) toward university students and Mulyono (2017) toward junior high students in Mathematics and Science found that independent learning gave strong impact toward students' metacognitive and discussion skills.

All the previous studies were studied about how learning environment affects students' learning outcome in some education levels. Besides, learning independent is known to have a good effect on students in improving English skills. Researcher finds interest in a group of students that make an independent learning group. The group has been founded based on the interest of these students in which reading activity has become their first activity. They read several fictions or novels and share them for other group members to read. The specialty of their group is that they choose English novels. As a teacher, the researcher finds that the students' activity in their new learning environment, in which they study in the group, are able to stimulate them to understand English better.

Moreover, they utilize the created learning environment to improve their skill in speaking through conducting an interaction or a communication with each other using English. In this informal setting, the students learn and share ideas without being interrupted by other people. They freely choose the topic and the

scope of reading based on their own interest.In this context their reading activity becomes a habit. In this sense, they are not aware that they are in the process of learning. In other words, they are subconsciously do an activity that are directly contributive to the development of their English proficiency. It is a kind of an unique case when a group of primary students can do independent learning in the environment that is created by them. toward extensive reading to improve their English proficiency. During the researcher's preliminary observation, it is identified that the students enjoy doing their activity. Their eagerness to study in group and to share one and another implies that they are keen of their own model of learning environment. Practically, a conducive learning environment is potential to support students' motivation. The main reason is that in this environment the students stay in an expected situation. Their desire to create a place or a situation to learn inspires them to enjoy learning with their friends. Furthermore, in its practice, the availability of a good learning environment invites students' favorable attitudes toward learning language. According to Hsieh (2002) there is a positive relationship between the learning environment and students' motivation in learning. The author further elaborates four guiding principles to define an excellent learning environment: (a) a good learning environment helps to improve the learning outcome, (b) a good environment provides the learner with care and support, (c) a good learning environment inspires and boosts the learning spirit, and (d) a good learning environment cultivates responsibility in the learner. The availability of a good learning environment drives students' learning satisfaction and persistence. Therefore, a

good learning environment demands awareness of self-improvement of every student.

The development of the English language of these students, as an impact of their independent learning in their own learning environment, is extraordinary and it is beyond the teacher's expectations. In this study knowing the model of learning environment built by the students is worth. The researcher has a desire to examine more closely related to how these students build a language environment that supports their learning. In addition, the researcher needs to know the students' activities and how they contribute to improve their English proficiency.

B. Research Focus

Learning environment is one of important component to facilitate students' learning. The focus of this research is to find out the ideal learning environment according to the students.

C. Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates two research questions. Those are:

1. How do the students create a learning environment to support their independent learning?

2. What do the students think of a comfortable learning environment to support their independent learning?

D. Research Objective

Based on the formulation of the research questions above, the objectives of the study are:

1) To elaborate the process of creating a learning environment done by the students to support their independent learning.

2) To investigate the students' ideal of a comfortable learning environment to support their independent learning.

E. Significance of the Research

The findings of the study can be contributive both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Significance of the Research

Theoretically, the researcher expects that the result of this study can enrich the literature on the practice of learning environment to make a better methodology in developing students' English proficiency.

2. Practical Significance of the Research

Practically, several parties can use the research result so they can improve and maximize learning environment for student in general and language learners in particular.

a. Government and Policymakers

The result of the research might give some idea to make a better learning environment policy for students in the school area. So, Indonesian students' English proficiency can increase in quality.

b. English teachers

The result of the research hopefully motivates teachers to make a supportive learning environment for students.

c. Other researchers

The researcher hopes that other researchers can conduct further research concerning with learning environment to know a better language setting for students' developing foreign language.

F. Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this study helps focus on the investigation of a specific problem. In this research, the researcher focuses on students' perspective on learning environment that supports independent learning in a student group in Accelerated Destiny Academy.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding or wrong interpretation to the substance of the title, the researcher considers the key terms as follows

1. Learning Environment

According to Jonassen and Land (2000) learning environment is learning with willful, intentional, active, conscious, constructive practice that includes reciprocal intention-action-reflection activities. In this study learning environment is an environment created by a group of students to learn together.

2. Independent Learning

Independent learning is defined as that learning in which the learner, in conjunction with relevant others, can make the decisions necessary to meet the learner's own learning needs (Kesten, 1987).

3. Students' model of learning environment is a form of an environment that implies a condition where the students can enjoy learning English.

4. English Proficiency

English proficiency is defined as a person's ability to communicate in English effectively through speaking, writing or listening comprehension.