ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND ITS CORRELATION WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

A Thesis by

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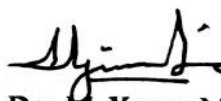SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY
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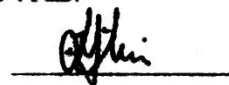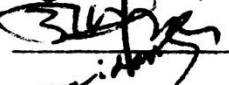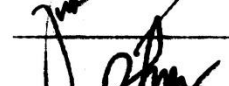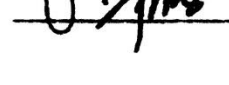Student Number: 06011281419054

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Certify that thesis entitled "Engagement in Learning and Its Correlation with the Academic Achievement of Students of English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University" is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face the court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 7th, 2018

The Undersigned,

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to…

- My beloved mother, Liu Djan Ni

- My heroic father, Zahri Kosim

- Also my brothers (Anton, Kevin) and my little sister (Cindy)

Thank you for all your love, supports and never-ending pray for me.

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Last, the writer hopes that this thesis will be useful in any aspects not only for researchers but for all people needed.

Palembang, July   2018

The writer

Steven Fernando Zahri

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ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND ITS CORRELATION WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to find the correlation between students' engagement in learning and their academic achievement. The sample used for the study was selected from the students of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University year 2015, 2016, and 2017. A total number of two hundred and thirty-one students were selected. This study provided not only the correlation but also the survey of the students' engagement and academic achievement of the students as well as the contribution of the students' engagement to their academic achievement. The instruments used in this study were questionnaire and documentation. The results of the study highlighted that the students could be classified as active students as 70% of the students chose active option while 30% chose a passive option. Then, the academic achievement of the students fell mostly in middle achiever for 84% which is between >2.67 - <3.66. Moreover, about the correlation, there was a very weak correlation between those two variables and a small contribution of the students' engagement to their academic achievement for about 3%.

Keywords: Students' Engagement in learning, Academic, Achievement

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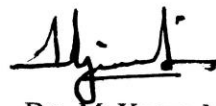
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) background of the study, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) significance of the study.

1.1.Background of the study

Participating in activities and being an active person in life are difficult tasks that every person has to learn and experience since he/she was a child. The biggest part of the experience occurs when they are still students in school, specifically, when the teacher asks them to be active in class. Therefore, classroom participation or also called students' engagement has been a well-known matter for decades because whether or not the students successfully become active is depending on the teachers and the strategy they use in the classroom. In line with that explanation, Martin, Heisel, and Valencic (2001) state, "Teachers who are assertive, responsive, immediate, and friendly have students who report communicating for relational, functional, and participatory motives (p.4)". Moreover, as the way the teachers communicate or the way the students understand the teachers may influence the students' motives (Cayanus, Martin, Goodboy, 2009). In general, students are divided into two types, active and passive. Passive students may not interact, share their insight, or communicate and those will influence other participants even the most enthusiastic one (Emelo, 2013). Therefore, teachers need to make passive students become active and active students maintain their activeness.

Moreover, Cross (1987) also states that when the students actively contribute to the learning task, they learn more rather than when they are passive recipients of instruction. In addition, Cayanus, Martin, and Goodboy (2009) highlight, "One of the important things of learning is the students' engagement in the topic (p.1)". The more time the students involved with a topic (e.g., reading, working on the project,

participating in class and outclass discussions), the more they learn about the subjects. Therefore, they do not become passive students that only wait for others to take a lead.

The National Survey of Students Engagement (2008) states, "Engagement means creating habits of mind (p.4)". Habit will affect the future of the students. In addition, in education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Students Engagement, 2016). However, creating a habit especially a good one is not as easy as it says. Therefore, teachers have to put a lot of effort to engage the students to be active because activeness is beneficial for personal and social while being passive, on the other hand, is unfavorable. The teacher will consider the passive students as a matter of problems that they should handle because the brains of passive students do not do the job of processing effectively or retaining information efficiently (Biggs, 2011). Therefore, teachers need to use the appropriate form as argued by Biggs (2003) that the learning activity depends on the level of student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction in a conducive-learning environment. Moreover, the concept of "student engagement" is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, in other words being active and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise "disengaged," in other words being passive. Stronger student engagement or improved student engagement are common instructional objectives expressed by educators (Students Engagement, 2016).

Teachers need to make sure that their students get the point of the learning so the students will get a good academic achievement by themselves. As Khandai and Illahi (2015) highlight, "Academic achievement occupies a very important place in education as well as in learning process and has become an index of child's future in this highly competitive world (p.1)". Almost all the students want to have a better

academic achievement and perhaps some do not really want it as long as they get the knowledge. However, the students who only want the knowledge not the academic achievement is unfavorable because the students' performance (academic achievement) takes a crucial part in producing the best quality graduates who will likely become a great leader and manpower for the development of the country's economic and social (Ali, Jusof, Ali, Mohktar, Salamat, 2009). Therefore, it will be great if the teachers can reduce the influence from the idea of "Academic achievement is not important" in the students' thinking.

Although every type of students, passive or active, in the classroom, can get grades above average or so, Biggs (2003) further suggest that active learners are able to obtain a further level of engagement and thus a higher level of cognitive learning in their academic work. In addition, Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008) claim that many studies have connected students' engagement with enhanced performance and it has repeatedly demonstrated to be a strong predictor of achievement and behavior in schools. The passive recipients will only achieve the knowledge, not the performance. Even though passive students can achieve a good result from the paper test, they will eventually encounter problems when they are required to use the skills they learn. As it is suggested that a lot of scholars consider class participation as evidence of active learning or engagement that benefits learning, critical thinking, writing, appreciation of cultural differences, time management and interpersonal, listening and speaking skills (Howard & Henney 1998; Peterson 2002; Petress 2006). Therefore, active learners will highly become the best graduates from the learning outcomes as they are supported with great result both in academic achievement and in academic performance. This is supported by the study conducted by Kumar (2007) in Fiji Island, which concluded that student-student and teacher-student interactions in the teaching and learning process work in many rewarding ways. This is in line with the finding in a study carried out by Biggs (2003) who found student participation in the teaching and learning environment leads to better learning outcomes.

Even though it is widely claimed that active students' participation in the college classroom facilitates both acquisitions of knowledge and development of problem-solving skills, the lacking of the actual evidence can either confirm or deny this hypothesis (Hill, 2007, Murray & Lang, 1997). Sometimes it is hard to say if the students are truly actively engaged in the lesson or not. In the first meeting, teachers or instructors may happen to tell the students to become active such as asking the question, or giving an opinion during the lesson as it will affect the students' grades in the future. Using that kind of treatment to foster the students' academic achievement is an unfavorable move for teachers as Bergquist and Phillips (1975) highlight,

> The weakest form of encouragement is to tell the students "I want or I expect you to participate in the class and part of your grade will be based on such participation." The problems this present are: A) What specific on the student's part count as participation? Asking questions, answering questions, giving a report, sharing information? B) How much of the student's grade is affected by participation? And C) What are specific consequences of not participating? (p.3)

It means that there are some kinds of threat for the students to be active. Probably a number of students react positively to this but how about the others. It is just as if it is necessary to be active in order to get a high score in that subject. They just do what they consider is active, such as asking questions, answering questions, raising hands, and be talkative. Even though they do not know what they are talking or questioning about. They just think as long as they speak, they can be considered active so their score will be better. As a result, the students will do get a higher level of academic achievement however they do not actively engage because of the lesson but instead, it is because they merely want a better grade for the final result. Not only that, there are also many factors that can affect academic achievement such as students' performance, communication, learning facilities, proper guidance, and family stress

(Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Moreover, if the teacher treats the active students differently, Hill (2007) claims "The fear of embarrassment or of being labeled a "know-it-all" or teacher's pet" may very well prevent the types of interactions that most teachers desire (p.1)". If that happens, it will surely affect students' life in the future and probably build an idea that being active is not as good as they think.

In higher education, students' engagement in learning is becoming increasingly crucial (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005). In a national survey of Bloomington, Indiana, only 54% of first-year students reported participating in classroom. Moreover, Kuh (2001) states that universities try to use student' engagement towards learning as a significant part of higher education assessment. In addition, Murray and Lang (1997) highlight that higher education emphasizes the limitations of the lecturing method of teaching and need for more engagement from the students in the classroom. Because the traditional lecturing-only is losing its charm in the classroom and students play too passive in lectures. In contrast, students nowadays are being prepared to face with mixed delivery methods, which exploit group discussion, dyadic work, and peer review which all of which reduce lecturing (Rocca, 2010). Moreover, the study conducted by Murray and Lang in 1997 showed that at least in certain conditions, active participation in the college classroom does, in fact, improve student learning of course content and development of problem-solving skill.

In addition, in elementary school until high school, students have already been taught by using lecturing and have seen it as a safer, easier and more reliable methods than others while it is true that lecturing may benefit the students in some other ways, it alone cannot guarantee that the students are able to be active (Friesen & Kristjanson, 2007). Hence, this college stage is the last stage for learners to improve their behavior of being active, as there will be many opportunities for the learners to speak up in front of the public, argue, and debate with others. Moreover, Fritschner (2000) also states that faculty has shown to perceive six levels of participation from

learners, moving from simply attending class to giving an oral presentation. It can be assumed that, in general, faculty in college has six level of participation. However, it is also possible for the fact that each faculty has its own standard how to measure participation from the students.

Scholars know that Bloom taxonomy is somewhat effective in teaching and learning process especially those who have been used it as a framework for formulation objectives and as a basis for evaluating students learning. However, Bell and Kahrhoff (2006) argue that different kinds of learning that are not stated in Bloom taxonomy are needed for parties who are involved in higher education. For example, learning how to learn, adapting to change, interpersonal skills, communication skills, character tolerance, and others are the types of learning that go beyond the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy. Therefore, from the examples above, students who involved in higher education will likely to receive a special treatment for them to achieve their goals. If the students are usually spoon-fed by the teachers, in higher education, they need to find a way to feed themselves as the teachers will give less information about the study and the students need to find their own way to understand the study.

From all the explanation above, it can be concluded that students' engagement has an important role for students to achieve success, as it will affect the academic achievement of the students. Many scholars believe that the more active the students in learning, the more the knowledge they get, and the better their chance to be successful in the future. Even though, sometimes it is not the things that people expected as some scholars argue that being active is not the only thing to be a success. The way the teachers teach their students may also affect the students, as there are many kinds of students in one classroom. Moreover, the higher education will need to be more engaged in learning and be active as suggested above. Nonetheless, participating, engaging, and contributing in terms of learning in the classroom can be considered as the top priority in order to have a great achievement

in their life and one step closer to be a success in the future. In this case, what the writer wants to find is the engagement in learning of the students, the academic achievement and the correlation between those variables also the contribution of students engagement in learning towards academic achievement.

1.2. The Problems of The Study

The problems of the study were formulated in the following questions:

1. What was the engagement in learning of English Education Study Program students of Sriwijaya University?
2. What was the academic achievement of English Education Study Program students of Sriwijaya University?
3. What was the correlation between students' of English Education Study Program engagement in learning and their academic achievement?
4. What was the contribution of engagement in learning to the academic achievement of students of English Education Study Program?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the problems of the study above, the objectives of this study include:

1. To find out what was the engagement in learning of English Education Study Program students of Sriwijaya University.
2. To find out what was the academic achievement of English Education Study Program students of Sriwijaya University.
3. To find out what was the correlation between students of English Study Program engagement in learning and their academic achievement.
4. To find out what was the contribution of the engagement in learning to the academic achievement of students of English Education Study Program.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

The study will participate in the existing body of researchers towards solving the problem of poor performance of students when learning. Furthermore, the findings from this study would provide empirical information on the students' engagement in learning, the academic achievement, the correlation, and also the contribution of students' engagement in learning to their academic achievement. Finally, the study would be a great help for teachers, students and even the future researchers that is intrigued with this study.

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